SASS
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED SOCIAL STUDIES

"BOOK OF ABSTRACTS"

17th Slovenian Social Science Conference 2024

"IS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION A SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION? COPING WITH RE-EMERGING SOCIAL CHALLENGES FOR HUMANITY"

Organizing institutions:

- Slovenian National Committee of the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST)
- School of Advanced Social Studies / Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije v Novi Gorici
- Slovenian Social Science Association

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Slovenian National Committee of the
UNESCO Management of Social Transformations Program (MOST),
School of Advanced Social Studies, Nova Gorica, Slovenia,
and Slovenian Social Science Association

17TH SLOVENIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE CONFERENCE
»Is digital transformation a social transformation?
Coping with re-emerging social challenges for humanity«

Keynote speakers:

Jo Ann R. Regan, PhD, MSW, FNAP is the Dean of the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., US

Scope of the Conference

Digital transformation and social transformation are intrinsically linked, as the former significantly influences and shapes the latter. Digital transformation involves the integration of digital technology into all areas of society, fundamentally changing how we live, work, and interact. This pervasive shift affects social structures, communication patterns, economic activities, and cultural norms. By altering the accessibility and distribution of information, digital transformation can democratize knowledge, foster social inclusion, and empower marginalized groups. However, it can also generate inequalities and create new forms of social stratification. Therefore, while digital transformation is a critical driver of social transformation, its impact is complex and multifaceted, necessitating careful consideration of both its benefits and challenges.

Besides influencing other aspects of life, digital transformation is revolutionizing pedagogical approaches by reshaping how education is delivered, accessed, and experienced. Integrating digital tools and platforms into educational settings has enabled more personalized and adaptive learning experiences catering to diverse learning styles and needs. Virtual classrooms, online resources, and interactive software have made education more flexible and accessible, breaking down geographical and temporal barriers. This shift has facilitated the adoption of blended learning models, where traditional face-to-face instruction is complemented by digital content, fostering a more engaging and interactive learning environment. Additionally, data analytics and artificial intelligence are being used to track student performance in real time, allowing educators to provide timely feedback and support. However, this transformation also requires educators to develop new digital competencies and pedagogical strategies to leverage these technologies effectively. Consequently, digital transformation is not only enhancing the quality and reach of education but also prompting a re-evaluation of teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and the role of educators in the digital age.

Digital transformation is also significantly impacting the mental well-being of persons, presenting both

opportunities and challenges. The advent of digital mental health tools, such as mobile apps, teletherapy platforms, and online support communities, has made mental health services more accessible and flexible. These innovations allow individuals to seek help discreetly and conveniently, breaking down barriers associated with stigma, cost, and geographical limitations. Moreover, digital platforms can offer continuous support and monitoring, providing real-time interventions and personalized treatment plans based on data analytics. However, the digital age also brings challenges to mental well-being, including increased screen time, social media pressures, and the potential for cyberbullying, all of which can contribute to stress, anxiety, and depression. The rapid pace of digital change can lead to feelings of overwhelm and digital fatigue. Therefore, while digital transformation holds promise for enhancing mental health care, it also necessitates a balanced approach that includes digital literacy, ethical considerations, and strategies to mitigate potential negative impacts on mental well-being.

Abstract, language, and submission:

Conference Contributions and Proceedings
The conference welcomed theoretically and empirically grounded papers addressing these themes, with particular consideration given to comparative and country-based studies. Contributions were submitted in English, with abstracts limited to 400 words and accompanied by author details. The submission and review process was managed via the online platform: http://conference.fuds.si/.

Publication of Papers
Authors of conference presentations had the opportunity to submit full papers by December 15, 2024. Accepted papers meeting the required academic standards will be published in an edited book or in the international scientific journal Research in Social Change (RSC), a peer-reviewed journal welcoming contributions for its 2024 volume. Papers could also be submitted before the conference, following the guidelines on the official RSC website. The publication process remains free of charge for accepted papers.

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The conference was made possible with the support of the national UNESCO MOST programme and was offered free of charge to participants.

Conference venue:
Hybrid form, Faculty of Information Studies Novo mesto, Ljubljanska cesta 31a, Novo Mesto 9, combining on-site participation (preferred) and online participation (for those unable to travel)

Prof. Borut Rončević, PhD Dean of SASS

Prof. Matej Makarovič, PhD
President of the MOST National Committee at UNESCO

Tea Golob, Matej Makarovič

Social transformations as unintended drifting? A trend of declining reflexivity in Slovenia

Abstract

The theory of social morphogenesis developed by Margaret Archer is focused on contemporary social change as the result of intentional agency based on personal and collective social deliberations. This kind of social dynamic implies high (and increasing) levels of reflexivity, especially meta-reflexivity based on critical (re)considerations of an individual's own actions and of her/his social contexts – as people can no longer mechanically follow the lessons learnt by previous generations. However, the data for Slovenia derived from a representative national social survey samples administered in four waves from 2018 to 2024 indicate a reverse trend – of slow but steady decline of reflexivity levels and of meta-reflexivity scores. It is too early to conclude whether this is a short-term fluctuation or a long-term trend. Nevertheless, the shift is consistent enough to consider the possible causes and consequences of this phenomenon, especially in terms of lacking empowering narratives and increased passivity related to the feelings of exclusion and lack of agency. As the society is changing anyway – at least due to the changes in its technological and natural environments – the lack of (meta)reflexivity may imply a shift from social morphogenesis to spontaneous, unintended drifting.

Key words: reflexivity, morphogenesis, social change, drifting, empowerment narratives

Sanja Živkovič

Inspiringly Intertwined: Leadership Framework for Digital and Social Transformation

Abstract

Leadership that integrates the intentional creation of positive social change through digital transformation can also influence social transformation. This conceptual paper aimed to provide a leadership framework relevant to the intertwined digital and social transformation. For this purpose, a literature review has been conducted. The method of theory synthesis was used to draw on the propositions of transformational leadership theory, stakeholder theory, and integrative framework of leadership competencies for digital transformation. The proposed leadership framework consists of the following dimensions: initiation (vision, purpose); intervention (collaboration, inclusion); and implementation (multiple intelligences). This paper extends the existing literature by providing a leadership framework that can be utilised to inspire the development, demonstration, and further research of digital and social transformation leadership across private, public, and non-profit sectors. It can be of practical value to current and aspiring leaders, leadership development specialists, and educators. The interdisciplinarity of the leadership phenomenon calls for the collaboration of scholars from the fields of management, sociology, and psychology to advance future empirical research on the role of leadership in the intertwined digital and social transformation.

Keywords: leadership, leadership framework, digital transformation, social transformation, social change

Tope Shola Akinyetun, Abiodun Fatai-Abatan, Nife Ogunbodede

Digital Surveillance and the Threat of Democratic Capture in Africa

Abstract

The rise in digital tools and their proliferation in Africa has transformed social, economic, and political structures. In addition to its capacity to strengthen democracy through political participation and social inclusion, it enables social transformation through citizen engagement and civic activism. Despite its merits, there is growing concern that the misapplication of digital tools threatens democratic consolidation, especially in transitional democracies in Africa. The growing trend of democratic capture and digital authoritarianism is fuelled by the rise in digital tools that are often used to engage in illegal surveillance of citizens and undermine Internet rights and freedom. This study investigates how digital surveillance contributes to the phenomenon of democratic capture in Africa, where political elites and foreign powers use surveillance technologies to monitor, manipulate, and control political discourse and dissent. This study, anchored on surveillance theory, adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data sources such as journal articles, textbooks, policy reports, newspaper articles, and Internet sources. The study found that state-sponsored and foreign-initiated surveillance programs contribute to the weakening of democratic institutions, particularly in states with fragile governance structures. It concludes that digital surveillance serves as a tool for democratic capture by enabling the monitoring of political opponents, suppression of free speech, and manipulation of electoral processes by authoritarian regimes who often act in conjunction with external actors with vested interests. The study recommends that African nations should strengthen legal frameworks that protect citizens' privacy and freedom of expression and develop independent oversight mechanisms that can hold governments accountable for the misuse of surveillance technologies.

Keywords: Africa, democracy, digital authoritarianism, fragile, surveillance.

Suchet Kumar

On the Path to New Social Analytics: The Sociology of Artificial Intelligence

Abstract

Investigation aims to provide an analytical technique that specifically focuses on analysing a certain »type« of AI. A scientific inquiry conducted from the standpoint of »scientific AI« examines »AI« as a scientific discipline or area of study. Research conducted from the »technical AI« approach focuses on studying AI as a meta-technology and analyzing its different applications and sub-technologies. Research guided by the »cultural AI« paradigm regards AI development as a social phenomenon and investigates its connections with the broader social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances in which it evolves and is influenced. These analytic viewpoints demonstrate how »AI« has transformed from primarily being a scientific study topic in the 20th century to a widely commercialized invention in recent decades, and now it has become a separate socio-cultural phenomenon in today's society. The purpose of the paper is to provide a sociological explanation of the interaction that exists between humans and artificial intelligence. The paper will give a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of artificial intelligence through the application of sociological perspectives. What would be the boons and banes of artificial intelligence to society? An insight into the forthcoming job opportunities and careers created by artificial intelligence during the next 10 to 15 years.

Keywords: sociology, artificial intelligence, work , technology, theory

Abdulkhalig Mammadli

Accelerating Entrepreneurial University Development through Digital Transformation: A Strategic Proposal for Karabakh University

Abstract

This paper examines the transformative role of digital technologies in evolving Karabakh University into a leading entrepreneurial university. Positioned at the intersection of education, innovation, and technology, digital transformation offers a strategic avenue to enhance academic environments and engage with global economic challenges. We propose a targeted digital strategy for Karabakh University that includes the integration of advanced digital tools and platforms aimed at fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and collaboration across academic and industry boundaries. This approach not only accelerates the university's transition into an entrepreneurial hub but also aligns it with broader societal transformations, potentially setting a benchmark in the educational sector. The recommendations provided herein aim to leverage digital transformation as a catalyst for social and economic development, positioning Karabakh University at the forefront of the global educational landscape.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Entrepreneurial University, Academic-Industry collaboration

Abdelfattah Ezzine

Digital in crisis time: Women's daily life under COVID-19

Abstract

This is a presentation of the findings and observations of fieldwork carried out with my students during the health curfew.
The theme was »Women's daily lives under COVID-19«.
We will address the following points:
1- Methodology adopted
2- Participant characteristics
3- The themes developed
4- Digital and its paradoxes
4- Conclusions and research avenues (field revisited)

Keywords: Women/Gender, Crisis (COVID-19), Digital impacts

Fatjona Haka

Exploring the relationship between shame, guilt, loneliness and peer interaction in primary school students

Abstract

The main goal of this research is to explore the relationship between the self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt, loneliness, and bullying behaviors, specifically aggression and victimization among primary school children.
The design is non-experimental, descriptive-correlational. It is quantitative research with a sample of 250 respondents aged 8-12.
Three measures were used to implement the research
1. Brief Shame and Guilt Questionnaire for Children (Novin & Rieffe, 2015) has 12 items.
2. Children's Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Scale (Asher, Hymel & Renshaw, 1984) has 24 items
3. Peer Interactions in Primary School Questionnaire (Tarshis & Huffman, 2007) has 22 items.
Additionally, data on age and sex were gathered. After data cleaning and verification the following analyses were conducted:
- Normality tests
- Bivariate correlations
- Partial correlations
- One-way Anovas
- Multiple regressions

Analyses were conducted for the entire sample and males and females separately.
The findings that have been interpreted so far show significant differences between males and females and also provide some interesting implications about the interaction of guilt with bullying behaiors.
The research has important implications, especially for bullying in the primary education system since the interplay between bullying behaviors and the other variables of this research has not previously been studied in the country.

Keywords: Shame, guilt, loneliness, aggression, victimization, middle childhood

Sharon Everhardt

Engaging Students in Incarcerated Settings to Rebuild Lives

Abstract

This presentation will discuss the development and implementation of a horticulture program for incarcerated women in the United States. This Program uses a clinical sociology rights-based approach in efforts to bring better fresh food access and educational opportunities to incarcerated women to improve their well-being. The program is in a southern U.S. state, where women have some of the highest incarceration levels in the nation coupled with high state-level poverty and food insecurity rates. Methodology and program outcomes for program participants will be discussed as well as some of the challenges the program has encountered including integration of digital technologies into the program.

Keywords: Clinical Sociology, U.S. Prisons, Incarceration, Food security, Women

Vatsal Tewari, Arpita Mishra

Unplugging in the Age of Tech: Exploring Digital Detox Movements Among Urban Indians

Abstract

Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys of urban professionals in major Indian cities, in-depth interviews with digital detox participants and organizers, and analysis of social media discourse, this study explores how urban Indians navigate the tension between technological immersion and deliberate disconnection. The research examines how traditional Indian concepts such as 'pratyahara' (withdrawal of the senses) and modern mindfulness practices influence the framing and practice of digital detox in the Indian urban context.

Key areas of investigation include the socioeconomic profile of urban Indian digital detox participants, the role of India's tech industry in both promoting and resisting hyper-connectivity, and the unique challenges of »unplugging« in urban societies where smartphones have become crucial tools for accessing essential services. The study also considers how caste, class, and gender intersect with digital detox practices in the Indian urban social landscape.

Furthermore, this research analyzes how digital detox movements among urban Indians reflect broader societal concerns about work-life balance, mental health, and the preservation of traditional social interactions in the face of rapid urbanization and digitalization. It explores the potential of these movements to influence corporate policies, particularly in India's prominent IT sector, and their implications for the country's ambitious digital inclusion efforts.

By examining digital detox through the lens of urban Indians, this study contributes to a more nuanced, culturally-informed understanding of global responses to hyper-connectivity. It offers insights relevant to policymakers, mental health professionals, and business leaders in India and other rapidly digitalizing urban societies, while also enriching the global discourse on healthy technology use in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Detox, Urban India, Technostress, Cultural Adaptation, Mindful Disconnection

Blaž Rodič

The false information epidemic in social media: overview of recent developments and research

Abstract

Throughout history, crises in human society have often been accompanied by unintentional (misinformation) as well as deliberate (disinformation) spread of false information, dating back to ancient Egypt. However, the rise of online social networks has brought the magnitude of the so-called 'fake news' phenomenon to an unprecedented size. The World Economic Forum identifies disinformation as one of the foremost threats to human society. In our digital society, the rapid and widespread propagation of false information poses significant challenges to democratic processes. This contribution provides an overview of research on the spread of false informationon social networks, with a focus on major global crises such as the U.S. elections, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine, and presents the results of our ongoing research project in this area.

Keywords: social media, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, simulation modelling

Mateja Rek

Youth in the Post-Truth Era: Fact-Checking and Digital Media Habits

Abstract

In an era marked by the pervasive influence of digital media, understanding how young people navigate the digital landscape is crucial, particularly in discerning credible information from misinformation and disinformation. This study presents findings from a 2024 survey conducted on a nationally representative sample of high school students (aged 15 to 19 years) in Slovenia, focusing on their media exposure, levels of trust towards various digital media and their responses when doubts arise about the content they encounter.

The survey provides a comprehensive overview of Slovenian youths' digital media habits, highlighting their preferred sources of information, with a notable inclination towards mobile phones, social media and online news platforms over traditional media. Alongside this, the research delves into students' levels of trust in these media sources, uncovering a complex relationship between trust and their susceptibility to misinformation. Data on trust in digital media provides insights into how users perceive the credibility and reliability of the information they encounter online.

A key focus of the study is the students' critical engagement with digital content. When faced with dubious information, many students reported experiencing doubts about the content's credibility. The study explores whether these doubts prompt actual fact-checking behaviours and investigates the extent to which students actively seek to verify questionable information. Findings suggest a gap between the recognition of potential misinformation and the subsequent action taken to verify it, highlighting a critical area for educational intervention.

By examining media exposure, trust, doubt, and fact-checking behaviour of youth, this study provides topical insights for developing targeted strategies to enhance critical engagement with digital content. In the context of post-truth digital media, fact-checking behaviour is crucial as it helps individuals navigate misinformation and disinformation, promoting a more informed and discerning approach to consuming online information. Strengthening these skills is essential for fostering a generation that is better equipped to critically assess the credibility of the content they encounter.

Keywords: fake news, disinformation, misinformation, fact-checking, critical thinking, media literacy, youth

Emilio Çika, Ilir Hebovija

Digital Political Communication: Navigating the New Media Landscape in Albania

Abstract

The rapid evolution of the internet has transformed political communication, paralleling the impact television had on politics in previous decades. This paper explores the dynamics of digital political communication in Albania, highlighting the shift from traditional media to online platforms. The advent of social media and blogs has enabled politicians and policymakers to engage directly with citizens, fostering a more interactive and democratic dialogue. Unlike traditional mass media, online media offers abundant and instantly accessible information, allowing consumers to select and interact with the content that interests them most.

This paper argues that the internet has deeply embedded politics into the daily lives of Albanians, providing a continuous stream of information that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. This has reshaped the electoral campaign strategies, with candidates increasingly relying on digital tools to reach voters. The flexibility and immediacy of online communication have made it an indispensable asset in modern political campaigns, allowing for real-time engagement and feedback.

However, the paper also cautions about the challenges of this new communication landscape. Politicians must navigate the complexities of online interactions, where the audience can respond instantly and critically. Effective management of digital communication channels is crucial to avoid potential missteps and to maintain a positive public image. The case of Albania provides a microcosm for examining these broader trends in political communication in the digital era.

Keywords: Political Communication, Political Campaign, Democratization process

Tomasz Kasprzak

Disability activism and social media users in Poland and Latvia: social movements in the Digital Age

Abstract

Social media provides disabled activism multiple options for constructing alternative narratives that challenge mainstream discourse. It's data collection, which took place between May nad July 2024, included three components. First, two textual pilot interviews were conducted over WhatsApp to test the interview protocol. Second, in-depth interviews of 60-90 min were conducted with a 19 participants from Poland and Latvia. The research was conducted as part of the project "Involvement of the movement of persons with disabilities in monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Poland and Latvia". The interview protocol addressed aspects of self-perception and self-expourse of the participant's disability, presentations of disability identity, emotional and practical aspects of everyday social media use. The final part of the interview was focused on disability activism, which was defined for the purpose of the interviews as „disability advocacy aiming to promote social equality". Third, these interviewees present a spectrum of perceptions of disability activism in social media

Keywords: disability, disability activism, social media, social movements

Georgina Kiss-Kozma

How is digital media transforming young people's relationship strategies?

Abstract

Today, managing our lives without digital services is almost impossible. Digital culture is no longer just a new way of communicating and consuming content, and its impact is no longer limited to young people. Over the past two decades, we have witnessed the rise of virtual spaces and digital content, and today's 15–29-year-olds are impossible to understand outside of the context of digital culture. During the past twenty years, having a computer and especially accessing the Internet has moved from being a luxury to becoming basic infrastructure. In Hungary, sharp growth between 2000 and 2008 was followed by slow expansion; as a result, the vast majority of young people now have computers in their homes and even higher rates of access to the Internet. In 2000, 9 percent and in 2020, 93 percent of 15-29-year-olds had Internet access at home. This also had a significant impact on their relationship habits and strategies. Due to the spread of the Internet, the use of dating apps has skyrocketed, fundamentally altering the way people find and interact with potential romantic partners. As a consequence, individuals may readily engage with each other on a worldwide scale. Dating services, the formation of relationships, are all profoundly impacted by online meeting platforms.

In my presentation, I present findings of research carried out by the Youth Research Institute, which examined young people's online dating habits and perceptions about relationships. The rise of »situationships« and other novel kinds of online dating evidence that social media and dating applications have had a remarkable impact on the transformation of relationship forms.

Keywords: youth, family, relationship forms, social media, Hungary

Luciana Anastasoaie, Florin Lazar

Support and change tools of Social Values in the Digital age. A qualitative analysis of the social values within Romanian communities in the American diaspora.

Abstract

Diaspora communities are constituted based on a variety of interests, including economic, religious, ethnic, and so forth. They play a role in providing support and sustaining newcomers, a role of integration and assimilation, and a role in redefining identity. However, it can be argued that the most significant aspect for immigrants is communication with those in their countries of origin, which is both a consequence of and facilitated by new technologies.

The following paper presents a selection of the analyses conducted as part of the PhD programme on »Dynamics of social values in Romanian communities in the United States«. The evolution of social values among first-generation immigrants was examined using two distinct theoretical frameworks: the approaches of Rezsohazy and Rochon, which pertain to social values, and Massey's unified theory, which is pertinent to migration theories.

The research is qualitative and exclusively online, examining the websites of diaspora communities. It is based on semi-structured interviews with 18 community representatives, which was mainly due to the context of the pandemic.

The analysis of the interviews revealed at least 3 important directions for relationship building in the digital age. First, the faster access to »instant« information and communication that has developed and has been sustained as both an economic and relational necessity. Secondly, migrants were and are informal agents facilitating access to new technologies and transmitting them to underdeveloped areas. And last but not least, human values, traditional, modern and postmodern, are in a much more open and transparent dialectic with economic and scientific values, visible through online social networks.

The continued significance of the face-to-face or »need to be felt« relationship for migrants provides a basis for new avenues of inquiry that can be augmented by technological tools and insights from neuroscience and neurobiology. This presents novel avenues for research that can be facilitated by technological tools in examining social values.

Keywords: Social values, Diaspora, Communities, Relationships, Social-Media, Neurobiology of values

Birungi Robert

Social networks and gender based mass violence: the relationship between the two in the context of the Ugandan society

Abstract

Whereas Social Networks, in their various online forms, ease social interactions, dissemination of information and strengthen social relationships, they equally stand in the dock for birthing, breeding and propagating offline mass violence. Through hashtags, diverse comments, sharing of unedited videos, uncensored livestreams and other means, Social Networks wield extensive and enormous communication power influential in inciting mass violence that negatively impact, mainly the unsuspecting females as well as members of LGBTQ both in private and public spaces. In this paper, I rely on the context of the diverse Ugandan society to specifically investigate how Social Networks enable production, reproduction and persistence of long held societal patriarchal beliefs, perpetual gender-based animosities, taboos, cultural gender biases, gender stereotypes, myths, that directly or indirectly incite mass violence against women and LGBTQ members of our society. Social Networks have not only let loose patriarchal beliefs about women, originally confined to the private sphere, but has also radicalized a selfish newness among males, that subsequently takes a violent crescendo in the name of mass violence. In the wake of gender-biased legislation, Social Networks have served as platforms of mobilizing violent mass action and online/offline harassment targeting women. Additionally, Social Networks have served as efficient tools in mobilizing and propagating social hatred, violent action and physical harassment of innocent members of the LGBTIQ communities. Social Networks often portray such members as social deviants and thus unworthy of societal protection and accommodation, consequently facilitating galvanized resistance and organized mass violence. Essentially social networks serve as platforms of circulating extreme intolerance and bias against genders deemed socially unacceptable. This extreme online intolerance whose essence is largely miscommunication and social profiling, actually spills into the real-world causing mass violence. My Methodologically, the paper relies on interviews, observation, online polls, ethnography and existing literature as tools of scholarly investigation to ascertain the authenticity of empirical evidence.

Keywords: social networks, gender, mass violence, uganda

Priya Dahiya, Rinki Dahiya, Dr. Deepika

Digital Transformation in India: Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide and Socio-Economic Inequalities

Abstract

Digital transformation in India has emerged as a pivotal strategy to mitigate the longstanding disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as address socio-economic inequalities. This transformative process harnesses the power of digital technologies to bridge the divide by enhancing connectivity, access to services, and economic opportunities across diverse geographical and demographic segments of the population.

The rapid expansion of digital infrastructure, including mobile networks and internet connectivity, has played a crucial role in extending the reach of digital services to rural India. Initiatives such as the Digital India campaign have been instrumental in promoting digital literacy, enabling e-governance, and facilitating access to healthcare and education in remote areas. These efforts are aimed at empowering individuals and communities by providing them with the tools and resources necessary to participate more actively in the digital economy.

However, challenges persist, including disparities in internet penetration, digital literacy rates, and infrastructure development between urban and rural regions. Moreover, socio-economic factors such as income levels and educational attainment continue to influence digital access and utilization. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy interventions, public-private partnerships, and community engagement strategies tailored to local contexts.

This article examines the current landscape of digital transformation in India, focusing on its impact on bridging the urban-rural divide and reducing socio-economic inequalities. By analyzing existing policies, initiatives, and case studies, the aim is to identify effective strategies and best practices that can inform future interventions. Ultimately, the goal is to provide insights into how digital transformation can be leveraged as a powerful tool for inclusive growth, equitable development, and sustainable socio-economic progress across India's diverse socio-cultural landscape.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Urban-Rural divide, Socio-economic Inequalities, Digital India and Inclusive growth

Daniel Dylewski

Digital democracy in Poland - perspectives and reality

Abstract

Poland is a democratic state of the rule of law. We have 4 general elections within electional cycle: every 5 years we have: Presidential, EU Parliament and local governments, and every 4 years we elect our parliament (Sejm and Senat). In previous 10 years, strong part of Polish administration become digitalized. There are happening discussion about option to make our elections online (or other forms of democracy). I would like to be opposite to this innovation.

Firstly, I would like to express, that it is very difficult to provide digital elections fully trust-worthy in term of proper calculation of results and providing anonimisation. Digital technologies works good when all data are open - but it should be impossible to connect vote to the citizen and same time be sure about on whom vote go.

Secondly, voting is very fast experience. In case of usual administrative services, there is no big problem, if the system does not work correctly and will be corrected the next day. But in case of elections, such damage may affect all results, and big traffic in the internet creates extraordinary threats for it. Especially, Poland has hybrid war against Belarus, and its secret agents (or Russian) may try to disturb Polish elections to achieve good for them result or at least increase internal polarisation.

Thirdly, Poland is extremely polarized country. It is not only important if really system works correctly, but also government has to not try to cheat on it, and opposition has to believe in it. In case of digital system it is much more difficult to understand it, than in case of paper voting.

On the other hand, some digital technologies work correctly, allowing citizens present their opinion in less important issues (like participatory budget), and it may be good allowing them to decide, with much lower costs.

In order to sum up, I see many threats to e-voting and find not worthy to introduce it, but seeing some options to digitalize some decision-making processes on local level or consultations, which is also part of people's participation in governing.

Keywords: Democracy, participatory budget, hybrid war, digitalization, elections

Ulviyya Musa Babayeva

Ethics and responsibility in digital communication

Abstract

The rapid digitalization of modern society determines the development of new forms of communication in many fields, including the educational environment. The need to adhere to ethical norms and principles is a condition for both personal and business communication. This article discusses concepts such as »digital ethics,« »virtual ethics,« »network ethics,« »information ethics,« »computer ethics,« and »non-ethical« and synonymous terms; and characterizes the main principles of digital etiquette. Communication has become faster and more accessible with the widespread use of technologies and the internet. However, some aspects need to be considered for effective communication to convey messages clearly and meaningfully. The article discusses digital communication, ethical rules during this communication, and responsibility.

Keywords: ethics, digital etiquette, digital environment, distance education, communication skills

Sandeep Kaur

Navigating Connections: The Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Relationships and Interactions

Abstract

The advent of social media has fundamentally altered the landscape of adolescent social interactions and relationships. This study explores the multifaceted impact of social media on the social lives of adolescents, focusing on both positive and negative outcomes. Adolescents were chosen for this study due to their unique developmental stage, where social skills and relationships are crucial for personal growth, and because they are the most active demographic on social media platforms. By examining the frequency and nature of social media usage, its effects on face-to-face interactions, and its influence on the quality and depth of relationships, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of how digital communication shapes adolescent social dynamics.

Data were collected through a combination of surveys and focus groups with a diverse sample of 500 adolescents, aged 13-18, from various socio-economic backgrounds. Findings from the surveys indicate that 85% of adolescents use social media daily, with 60% reporting that it enhances their ability to stay connected with friends. However, 45% of respondents noted a decrease in face-to-face interactions, leading to concerns about diminished social skills. Additionally, while 70% of participants felt more confident expressing themselves online, 50% reported feelings of loneliness and social anxiety linked to their social media use. Focus groups provided deeper insights, revealing that adolescents perceive social media as both a supportive and competitive environment. Participants highlighted the pressure to present an idealized self-image, contributing to anxiety and reduced self-esteem, particularly among girls and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, they also noted that social media offers valuable platforms for support and self-expression that might not be available offline.

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on digital media's role in adolescent development and offers insights for parents, educators, and policymakers to better support healthy social growth in the digital age. Recommendations include promoting balanced media use, encouraging offline activities, and fostering digital literacy to mitigate potential negative impacts.

Keywords: Adolescents, Social Media, Social Interactions, Relationships, Digital Communication

Priya Dahiya, Dr. Deepika, Rinki Dahiya

Navigating India's Path to Self-Reliance: The Role of Skill Development

Abstract

India holds the potential to emerge as a global powerhouse and a center for expertise, largely due to its substantial and youthful population. With over 65% of its people under the age of 35, India's progress and economic advancement are likely to be propelled by this youthful workforce. In today's economy, where technology increasingly reigns supreme, knowledge and skills have become the primary currency. The rapid evolution brought about by the fourth industrial revolution, driven by artificial intelligence (AI), is swiftly transforming the landscape of work, creating abundant new and lucrative career opportunities while intensifying the demand for highly skilled individuals.

Despite India's literacy rate of around 70%, which lags behind even some of the least developed countries, only 20% of its population is deemed employable. A significant challenge has been the disconnect between higher education institutions and industry sectors. While industries require specialized expertise, a large number of recent graduates lack industry-relevant skills. As a result, youth and job seekers encounter numerous obstacles in securing meaningful employment aligned with their educational backgrounds. This paradox highlights the gap between the millions educated annually by academic institutions and the skill expectations of the business community.

Blame for this mismatch is often directed towards governmental policies and their implementation, with calls for higher education to meet international standards. However, the government has initiated various skill development programs and introduced the New Education Policy of 2020 to modernize education and address these challenges.

As India's graduate and working-age population continues to grow annually, employment and skill development have emerged as critical barriers to progress. To harness India's demographic dividend fully and achieve Prime Minister Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India), concerted efforts from both government and private sectors are essential. Collaboration with academia to align job requirements with curriculum development is crucial. Therefore, elevating human capital to a »strategic« status and integrating long-term human capital planning into economic strategy is imperative as India embarks on its journey towards self-reliance.

In conclusion, this article explores the multifaceted strategies and initiatives driving India's path towards Atmanirbhar Bharat, emphasizing the pivotal role of skill development in realizing this transformative vision.

Keywords: Skill India, Education System, Skill Gap, Employment, Aatmanirbhar Bharat

Levente Székely

Can trust be automated? – Youth content consumption at the threshold of singularity

Abstract

When examining trends in content consumption, the focus of social science research is primarily on consumer preferences and their changes. In the age of new media, which is characterized by constant accessibility and an oversupply of content, individual decisions are becoming increasingly important. The question is: what influences individual decisions, which processes shape consumer preferences? What makes certain media content popular? How can a single post instantly reach an audience of millions, and how can consumption and consumers themselves be manipulated?

Our society is mediatized and technologized; the amount of media we consume and our exposure to infocommunication technology is constantly increasing. The consumption characteristics of new media are identified by many as a defining generational characteristic. Prensky (2001), for example, speaks of digital natives as the ultimate winners of the information age, as opposed to digital immigrants who belong to the older generations. But can we really speak of a new generation of winners on the threshold of technological singularity, where algorithmic recommendations drive consumption and slowly take over the role of content producers? The presentation will address the question: how do young content consumers perceive the role and intentions of content producers and content intermediaries? Do higher digital competencies among young people go hand in hand with improved information literacy and skills related to the use of artificial intelligence?

Kewords: youth, artificial intelligence, algorithms, content consumption, consumer attitudes

Ulkar Isfandiyarova, Parvana Ismayilova

Exploring the Digital Transformation of Teaching-Learning Experiences of the Baby Boomer Generation in the rural university of Azerbaijan

Abstract

In Azerbaijan, the digital transformation of education has gained significant momentum, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated an abrupt shift to online learning. The pandemic exposed the digital skills gap among educators, especially those from the Baby Boomer generation, who often face challenges in adapting to new technologies. This demographic, typically defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, is now navigating a landscape that demands proficiency in digital tools and platforms to enhance teaching and learning.

As educational institutions strive to adapt to the digital future, it is essential to understand how these initiatives can empower older educators to effectively navigate and leverage new technologies in their teaching and administrative roles. The study begins with an overview of the current digital landscape in Azerbaijan, emphasizing the significance of digital skills in fostering a knowledge-based economy.

This study examines the digital transformation of teaching and learning experiences among the Baby Boomer generation in Azerbaijan, particularly focusing on university staff over 50. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, digital education was largely theoretical in Azerbaijan, especially in rural high schools. However, the sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic highlighted significant gaps in digital skills among educators, particularly those from the Baby Boomer generation. Using a qualitative research approach, this study explores the lived experiences of these older educators as they navigated the rapid transition to digital education.

A survey was conducted with 50 teachers from various regions of Azerbaijan to assess their adaptation to digital teaching methods. The questionnaire comprised six sections designed to evaluate the challenges and successes faced by these educators in embracing technology. The findings reveal both the struggles and the resilience of Baby Boomer teachers in adapting to new digital tools and platforms. This article aims to shed light on the importance of targeted training and support for older educators, emphasizing the need for continuous professional development to enhance their digital literacy and improve the overall quality of education in Azerbaijan.

Keywords: digital transformation, rural university, Baby-boomers, Azerbaijan, teaching-learning experience

Rinki Dahiya, Dr Deepika, Priya Dahiya

Beyond Borders: Transforming Education through Integrative STEAM Learning

Abstract

In the realm of contemporary education, the integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) has emerged as a transformative approach. Unlike traditional educational models that often compartmentalize subjects, STEAM encourages a holistic learning experience that bridges the gaps between disciplines. By incorporating arts into the traditionally STEM-focused curriculum, STEAM fosters creativity and innovation alongside technical proficiency. This interdisciplinary approach not only equips students with a comprehensive skill set but also prepares them for the complexities of a rapidly evolving global economy.

STEAM education emphasizes hands-on, project-based learning where students collaboratively tackle real-world problems. This method not only solidifies academic concepts but also cultivates vital 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and teamwork. Moreover, students learn to communicate effectively across disciplines, respecting diverse perspectives and harnessing collective creativity to innovate solutions. This collaborative approach mirrors the interdisciplinary nature of professional environments, effectively preparing students for future careers that demand adaptability and cooperation. In conclusion, integrative STEAM learning transcends traditional educational boundaries by promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing creativity among students.

Against this backdrop, the paper explores the transformative potential of STEAM integration in education, emphasizing its role in dismantling traditional subject boundaries and nurturing interdisciplinary thinking among students. Through case studies and theoretical analysis, it examines how STEAM integration fosters creativity, critical thinking, and innovation. Furthermore, it delves into the educator's pivotal role in crafting curricula that seamlessly blend arts and sciences, enriching the learning experience. The paper also addresses challenges and opportunities associated with implementing integrative STEAM approaches across diverse educational settings and cultural contexts, highlighting the potential of technology to facilitate collaborative learning experiences that transcend physical limitations.

Key words: Integrative STEAM Learning, Interdisciplinary Education, Critical Thinking Skills, Creativity and Innovation

Gizem Dak, Denitza Hinkova

Investigating the role of Experienced teachers in the Formation of Professional Identities of Early Career Teachers

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of experienced teachers about the roles of experienced teachers according to the perceptions of teachers at the beginning stage of their career of 1-5 years. The study was conducted using a phenomenological design within the framework of qualitative research approach. The study group of the research consists of 30 teachers working in primary and secondary schools at the 1-5 years stage of their career. A semi-structured interview form was used in the study. These data were analysed with MAXQDA 2020 qualitative data analysis programme. Since teachers at the beginning of their career experience some professional and social problems, they have roles such as instructional leadership, informatics leadership, and mentoring that they expect from experienced teachers. According to the findings, it can be suggested to revise the Prospective Teacher Training Programme.

Key words: Career, professional identity, experienced teachers

Muhamad Supraja

Finding and Developing Social Theory in the Digital Transformation

Abstract

So far, digital transformation has driven various aspects of social and cultural change, including social sciences. Various old perspectives are no longer relevant to explain the diversity of social phenomena that occur in people's lives, but some perspectives remain relevant and can still be used. It all depends on what side we want to study and analyze. Digital transformation has many sides, so to answer whether digital transformation means change in social sciences, I tend to choose a positive answer, although it can also be negative.

Digital transformation has driven so many changes and created new opportunities and possibilities. One of them is opening access for intellectuals to build intellectual networks that have similar concerns. It is also easier for the academic world to obtain many information and data needed to study and develop scientific ideas that we want to develop. Apart from that, equal opportunities can encourage collaborative scientific work which can give rise to various advantages and benefits, both social and academic.

Digital transformation can also be used to overcome strong academic conservatism and feudalism, so as to avoid the decay and death of social science. Although on the other hand, digital transformation which has the potential to encourage scientific progress is difficult to take place symmetrically. Intellectuals from rich countries often still dominate various academic and financial aspects in conducting research. In the future, it is necessary to encourage this asymmetrical condition to be changed to a more symmetrical one, by encouraging awareness of the importance of funding budget allocations for various forms of research in a country or higher education institutions.

Developing an appropriate digital transformation perspective is very necessary, because digital transformation should not lead to even more disasters in the form of poverty, violence, economic, social and environmental exploitation. Digital transformation is very relevant if it is directed at promoting prosperity, justice and reducing social inequality which has recently become larger. Of course, it is not easy to direct digital transformation in this direction, because more digital technologies, both in essence and substance, are controlled by capitalists who own capital, so that it has become the basic characteristic of capitalists who own capital to design transformation in order to accelerate the accumulation of capital and profits.

The choice of social theories that take sides and liberate, such as the critical theory perspective, is often not effective enough, because in the end it only confirms the ongoing status-quo of a power elite. Actors who initially try to be critical of power, in the end when their turn comes to enter a particular system of power fall into the abyss of corruption of power, monopoly and manipulation of power, so that when an opportunity for power opens up and they enter and are absorbed into it, the political behavior they practice no different from the elites who have previously been criticized.

Despite the various weaknesses inherent in the ongoing digital transformation, various efforts to find and develop a suitable approach need to continue. By continuing to carry out theoretical academic trials and analyzing and continuing to analyze the practical social implications, it is hoped that a more productive situation will be created.

Keywords: digital transformation, critical theory, elite circulation, symmetric, social justice

Mridula Muralidharan

An Intersectional Analysis of Gender-Based Violence in Digital Spaces: A Study from India

Abstract

The rapid advancements and the ever-expanding terrain of technology in recent decades have resulted in its increased usage. This newly created 'space' as a 'public sphere', in the Habermasian sense, has witnessed exponential growth in its consumption and utilisation but has also resulted in an escalation of criminality. The substantial rise in violence in the technosocial space is predominantly a gendered phenomenon called 'technology-facilitated gender-based violence'. It consists of a spectrum of behaviours including but not limited to stalking, bullying, sexual harassment, defamation, hate speech and exploitation that is enabled by technology. While there exists a marginally fair amount of literature explaining what constitutes technology-facilitated gender-based violence, however, there is a gap in the availability of data that corresponds to the literature since most of these studies tend to focus on heterosexual individuals based in high-income countries and ignore other important factors such as class, caste, race, sexual orientation, age, or disability. By preparing case profiles and using in-depth interviews with the victims and survivors of technology-facilitated gender-based violence based in India, the paper, therefore, makes an attempt at addressing these gaps by firstly, assessing the impact of technology-facilitated gender-based violence on the lives of the victims and survivors of the violence as a result of the newly emergent 'public space'; and secondly, also reflecting on the nature of the violence vis-a-vis the identity of the individual, with a primary focus on their gender identity, and intersectionalities such as caste and class location, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, disability, age etcetera. The framework of 'embodied harms' and 'hegemonic masculinities' provide a nuanced understanding of the occurrence and legitimisation of 'male domination' and reiteration of the oppressive power structure which perpetuates gender imbalances. Thereby, reminding us how that the virtual world is a significant part of our contemporary lives and is to be viewed as an extension of our social life. More importantly, resistance to violence in the digital sphere is crucial for it poses a threat to the safety, autonomy, and dignity of women and other gender minorities. Herein, the role of the feminist movement is critical for combating technology-facilitated gender-based violence through advocacy, initiatives for empowerment, legal reforms and as a result challenging the hegemonic structures by prioritising safe, inclusive, and just digital spaces.

Keywords: embodied harms, gender, hegemonic masculinities, technology, violence

Swapnil Singh

Bridging the Gap: Assessing the Digital Divide's Impact on E-Education in India

Abstract

The idea of digital divide gained prominence during 1990s and has been evolving ever since. Digital divide refers to the lack of access of resources or infrastructure that acts as a barrier or hindrance for people. In contemporary world, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a significant role and digital literacy has become essential. The reality of most of the developing nations is that a huge proportion of population faces social exclusion because of the existing digital divide. Addressing the digital divide is essential to mitigate these challenges and promote inclusive e-education in India. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of the digital divide on Indian society, with particular emphasis on analysing the implications of digitalization in Education system that contribute to social exclusion. The research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data is obtained through the secondary sources, while quantitative data is collected through a comprehensive survey questionnaire for the cross-sectional study. The sample size is determined using simple random sampling. The quantitative data analysis entails utilizing statistical techniques such as reliability analysis, factor analysis, T-test, ANOVA, and correlation-regression. The anticipated result of this study is to offer a strategic guideline to policymakers and public institutions, fostering social inclusion and enhancing national unity. India has historically faced division due to various factors, and in the contemporary era, it should aspire to achieve inclusivity, eliminating any form of discrimination in terms of digital access that could impede the advancement of a developing nation.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Discrimination, Education, Social Exclusion, Inclusion

Amna Ben Amara

Quality (Higher) Education in the Global South: Where to Now?

Abstract

Higher education institutions play an important role in promoting social sustainability through embracing diversity and inclusion and providing equal opportunities for all students regardless of their social, ethnic, sexual, and racial backgrounds. However, approaching sustainability should not only stop at guaranteeing equal access to (higher) education; rather, it should be seen in the campus culture, the curriculum, the educational programs, international cooperation, and teacher training. Given that these insights are thoroughly discussed in the UN Sustainable development goal number 4 on quality education, the question poses itself: Where do African countries stand vis-a-vis these transformative educational processes? Building on the above, through critically reviewing the existing literature on the interconnection between social sustainability and higher education, this paper focuses on the pitfalls and barriers that prevent the full implementation of the quality education goal in developing countries, particularly in the African context. Among the barriers detected are the lack of funding and resources, training gaps, language barriers, lack of easily accessible information, and geographical isolation. These barriers were further highlighted with the eruption of the pandemic, which proposed pressing questions for all of us to consider and act upon, including the infrastructure challenges, the exclusionary practices, the inequalities and injustices in educational practices and the gaps in technological advancement in Africa compared to other developed countries.

Keywords: Higher Education, Sustainable Development, Pitfalls, Covid-19, Quality Education, Africa, Digital Inclusion and Equity

Petra Kleindienst

Upholding Human dignity through Education

Abstract

The societal challenges of the 21st century, such as rapid technological changes, digitalization, and the growing role of artificial intelligence, require updated educational approaches that include discussions on human dignity within the context of these new realities. This article proposes greater integration of human dignity education across various courses and the use of participatory teaching methods, such as debates, projects, and interactive workshops, to enable students to develop a deeper understanding and critical reflection on the role of human dignity in modern society. The research findings contribute to the development of new educational approaches and encourage policymakers and educators to strengthen the role of human dignity in the educational process.

Keywords: human dignity, human rights, values, education, high schools

Nataša Matulayová, Tatiana Matulayová, Kateřina Janků

Integrating Virtual and Augmented Reality in Czech Higher Education: Developing Digital Competencies in Helping Professions

Abstract

The transformative impact of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) on higher education in helping professions in the Czech Republic is explored, highlighting their potential to create immersive and interactive learning experiences. These technologies enable dynamic, personalized learning that transcends traditional classroom boundaries, enhancing student engagement and understanding. In the broader context of digital and social transformation, VR and AR also promote knowledge democratization and social inclusion by overcoming geographical and temporal barriers. However, integrating these technologies into education presents challenges, such as the need for educators and students to develop new digital competencies—including technological literacy, instructional design, and ethical awareness—aligned with established digital competency frameworks like DigComp and ICT-CFT, to ensure effective use and prevent the exacerbation of digital inequalities.

Keywords: virtual and augmented reality, higher education, digital competencies, digital competency frameworks

Shaikh Mohammad Kais, Mst. Fahmida Khatun

ICT in Islamic school: A study of selected Madrasas in Northern Bangladesh

Abstract

With more cell phone subscriptions than people on the planet and two-thirds of the global population using the Internet, employing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in every sphere of life is an unavoidable reality at present. However, digital divides across and within countries continue to aggravate social and economic inequalities. Similarly, Bangladesh lagged behind the global average in ICT Development Index in 2023 with a meagre score of 61. With enrolling about one-fifth of all students, Islamic schools (madrasas) are a pivotal part of the education system in Bangladesh. However, comparing to general education, traditional madrasa education is marked by scant use of modern technologies in teaching and learning. A cross-sectional survey was conducted in selected Islamic schools in northern Bangladesh to pinpoint the exact status of ICT use in classrooms of these institutes. The findings indicate a poor status of ICT use in the surveyed institutes. Although most of the madrasas aim at making ICT an integral part of their curricula, realizing this vision is encountered by numerous challenges such as lack of ICT equipment, poor infrastructure quality, lack of training, lack of institutional supports, low initiatives from government, teachers' and students' apathy etc. This study recommends taking pragmatic policies and roadmaps that will broaden the scope for incorporation of ICT facilities in Islamic schools, which in turn will help create a tech-savvy generation in Bangladesh.

Keywords: ICT, Madrasa, Bangladesh

B. Baris Yildiz, Gizem Dak, Denitsa Hinkova

In examination of tolerance trends of secondary students in distance education in terms of various variables

Abstract

This research investigates the level of tolerance tendencies of secondary school students in distance education and the tolerance exhibited by the students depending on gender, age, grade, parents' educational status, number of siblings, income level, pre-school education, book reading time, distance education lesson hours, distance education. It aims to determine whether there is a significant difference according to the use of computer tools, internet access, internet and social media usage times and the use of IT tools. The population of the research conducted using the quantitative method consists of students studying in public secondary schools in Avc?lar district of Istanbul. The sample consists of 2287 students selected by random method from the study population. Data were collected with the Tolerance Tendency Scale developed by Çal??kan and Sa?lam (2012). The main result obtained in the research is that the tolerance tendencies of secondary school students in distance education are »very high« in the value sub-dimension, »high« in the acceptance sub-dimension, »very high« in the empathy sub-dimension, and »high level« in the overall scale. While there is no significant difference between the tolerance tendency levels of secondary school students in distance education in terms of father's education, number of siblings, and income level, gender, age, grade, mother's education, receiving pre-school education, book reading time, distance education lesson hours, distance education tool, internet access. There is a significant difference in terms of internet and social media usage time and use of IT tools.

Keywords: Distance education, value, tolerance, tolerance tendency scale

Hanifa Yunuslu

Technology Integration in Education

Abstract

Technology integration has become an integral part of modern education, revolutionizing the way students learn and teachers teach. This abstract explores the impact of technology on education, highlighting its potential to enhance learning outcomes, promote critical thinking, and foster collaboration. It discusses the various ways technology can be integrated into the classroom, including digital tools, online resources, and virtual learning environments. Additionally, the abstract addresses the challenges and opportunities associated with technology integration, emphasizing the importance of effective professional development for educators. By understanding the benefits and considerations of technology integration, educators can harness its power to create engaging and effective learning experiences for students.

Keywords: Technology integration, digital learning, educational Software, Learning Management System (LMS), Artificial intelligence (AI) in education

Larissa G. Titarenko

International Asynchronous Distance Courses: Can they Provide Personalized Educational Opportunities?

Abstract

Before COVID-19 period and the years of vast deterioration of international situation in the world due to the war in Ukraine, there existed a sustainable tendency to develop joint distance courses for the university students from different countries. Such courses were numerous between the EU and the US universities. However, they also existed in Russia and in Belarus. This paper will use the experience of the asynchronous distance sociology courses that functioned for more than 10 years where students from Belarusian State University and SUNY participated. Our analysis is based on the research results of joint distance courses: students' chats organized within the classes, personal interviews with the students of both universities, and their written feedback on the courses after their finishing. The paper describes the personal students' perception of joint distance learning process, including such elements as a possibility to communicate with the professor any time, an option to discuss with other students any questions and express the individual viewpoints, a chance to learn material asynchronously and without participation of regular classes. Students' assessment of distance methods in a joint class was positive, because these classes provided effective combined formal and informal tools of communication, freedom to learn the sources that are not prescribed, accounting the individual educational interests, etc. The long term effects of asynchronous distance courses included better understanding of each other among the students and enlargement of their cultural potential on the basis of digitalized educational technology.

Keywords: International Distance Courses, Asynchronous Approach in Leaning, Joint Courses

Ayshan Mustafazada

The Role of AI in Shaping the Future of Education: Enhancing Learning Outcomes with Adaptive Algorithms

Abstract

Through the introduction of adaptive algorithms that improve learning outcomes and transform conventional teaching techniques, artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming education. To create personalized, student-centered learning experiences, this article investigates the importance of AI-driven technologies such as machine learning models, intelligent tutoring systems, and personalized learning platforms. AI systems deliver customized feedback, adapt learning materials to each student's needs, and pinpoint areas that still need work by real-time analysis of student data. By adjusting to each student's unique pace and learning style, this personalized method not only promotes deeper engagement but also improves academic success.

Predictive analytics benefits greatly from AI as well, enabling teachers to recognize at-risk kids and provide timely interventions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) facilitates targeted help by detecting learning issues early on, which increases student retention and success rates. Furthermore, by using AI-powered technologies to automate administrative work, teachers may spend more time guiding student interaction, which improves instruction quality overall. These technologies' scalability allows AI to be applied to a wide range of educational settings, including K–12 and higher education, facilitating universal access to high-quality learning materials.

The integration of AI in education presents obstacles even with its potential benefits. The digital divide that restricts access to these technologies, potential biases in AI algorithms, and ethical concerns over data privacy are among the main causes of concern. To ensure that AI fosters educational justice and diversity rather than escalating already-existing inequities, these issues must be addressed.

As AI continues to advance, its potential to shape the future of education becomes increasingly apparent. By creating more adaptive, efficient, and inclusive learning environments, AI stands to revolutionize how students learn and how educators teach, preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce. This paper outlines the transformative impact of AI on education, focusing on its capacity to enhance learning outcomes through adaptive algorithms.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), student-centered learning, education, teaching, network, conventional teaching techniques, students

Turkanbayim Ahmadli

Enhancing Critical Thinking in English Classrooms Through AI-Driven Project-Based Learning

Abstract

Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of AI-based instruction and AI integration in improving critical thinking and project-based learning (PBL) in language education. PBL activities have been shown to promote students' both critical and analytical thinking skills as well as vocabulary acquisition, and productive and receptive skills. Learners and instructors mostly have demonstrated positive perceptions of AI-powered instruction and PBL, acknowledging its effectiveness in fostering a critical thinking mindset. However, further research is needed to explore its impact on a newly established regional university and its implementation across multifaceted educational settings.

This study focuses on studying the impact of AI tools on first-year newly-established higher educational institution learners' critical thinking in a project-based English learning environment. I intend to do a brief qualitative study with focus groups to check students' perception and interaction with AI tools in PBL-based activity.

Keywords: PBL, AI, English, critical thinking

Gulgadam Farmanli Dadashova, Lamiya Rzayeva-Ahmadli

Digitalisation in Social Work Education: Contribution and Challenges of Online Learning in the Context of Azerbaijani Social Work School

Abstract

During the period of the development of social work education in Azerbaijan, as in many other countries, the use of traditional teaching methods has been inevitable. Social work, which is taught in more than ten universities in the country and various branches, has required the utilization of technology to make it accessible to everyone.

On a global scale, over the last 35 years, without any physical struggle but rather through a technological battle that has emerged from human intellect, it has been contemplated to what extent online education will play a significant role in the teaching of social work (Kurzman, 2019). Considering that social work is a profession that ensures interpersonal communication, interaction, and visuality, the question arises as to how it integrates with information technology and how it can be utilized effectively.

Particularly in the last 4-5 years, during which the importance of online education has been realized, many online education platforms have been created and developed. Their accessibility, ability to create new opportunities, and economic affordability have further enhanced their significance. This form of education aligns with the mission of social work to ensure equality of opportunities and accessibility for all segments of society, enabling every individual to pursue continuous education and self-development.

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the benefits and drawbacks of the innovative approach to social work education, the combination of formal and non-formal education methods, online social work education, as well as its future implications, through the example of the SIM Social Work School in Azerbaijan, which has three years of experience. Additionally, this research looks at the "edutainment" concept through social work glasses. The statistical data obtained highlight the significance and relevance of the research.

Keywords: social work education, online education, digitalization, non-formal education, edutainment

Imran Azer Bayramov, Sona Vugar Pashayeva

The Shallowing of the Caspian Sea and its Impact on the Socio-Economic Sustainability of Greater Baku

Abstract

The Caspian Sea is the largest waterless lake in the world, with an area of 370 thousand km2 and a total water volume of 77 thousand km3. The most important feature of the Caspian Sea is the constant level fluctuations. Against the background of this process, Baku, the largest city in the South Caucasus, has important calls for the implementation of sustainable projects in line with the economic, social, and environmental strategies of sustainable development, as well as the solution of socio-economic problems in the fields of industry, human wellbeing, trade, and energy security.

Based on geological, ecological, and geographical studies of the Caspian Sea and the processes taking place in the sea, rational placement of economic and production sites, as well as assessment of the current state of trade and transport infrastructure and determination of future development prospects, are among the main issues.

There are currently two main approaches in the field of hesitation assessment and reconstruction. The first is the traditional paleogeographic method. This method combines geomorphological and geological (stratigraphic) studies, palaeohydrological reconstructions, and palynological analysis. The second approach is based on mathematical modeling of climate in geological history. As a result of digital modeling of the paleoclimate, changes in the atmosphere and water basin within the existing data and under the influence of physical and geographical factors characteristic of the period are determined. Mutual comparison of the results of paleogeographic and digital modeling methods is an important tool in determining the causes of level dynamics.

Depending on the paleoclimatic conditions, the growth (in thermochron) or decrease (in cryochron) of the flow in the Volga and other rivers partially formed in the watershed basin; the growth and reduction in the watershed area and evaporation from the mirror surface of the basin formed because of multi-year temperature indicators prove the dependence of fluctuations on the climatic factor in general.

No matter how controversial it may be that the Caspian Sea is a lake or a sea as a unique natural object, it is appropriate to consider it more as a lake from a geographical and geological point of view. The hypsometric position of its level as a non-flowing lake determines many features of the hydrological regime. The hypsometric position of the level is quite sensitive to changes in the parameters of the water balance. These parameters can include the volume of flow of rivers flowing into the sea, evaporation from the water surface, and the amount of atmospheric precipitation within the water area.

If in the Neopleystocene the amplitude of hesitations exceeded 150 m, then in the Holocene in more stable climatic and tectonic conditions this indicator was within 12–14 m. In the historical period of the last 2000–2500 years, the range of variation was in the range of 9–10 m. Since 1837, systematic instrumental observations have been carried out in the Caspian Sea. During this period, the level fluctuation was 3.6 m. In the XX century, this quantity did not change significantly and was 3.4 m.

The level of the Caspian Sea does not change during the year. The average annual quantity of these seasonal fluctuations reaches 30–40 sm. In some regions, this indicator can reach 60–70 sm. The figures mentioned are given without considering wind (drift) currents. In practice, this natural factor must also be

considered, as it has a significant impact on water level fluctuations on the basin coast. Thus, because of wind (drift) flows, the level rose to 4.5 m and reached –23.7 m, and the Astrakhan-Makhachkala railway was flooded (November 1952).

The configuration of the shores of the Caspian Sea is quite complex. The shores differ not only in their shape, but also in geomorphological characteristics. The plains of accumulative-marine origin were complicated by the deltas of rivers, and the coast took the form of indented and protruding. Here are large bays such as Kyzyl, Astrakhan, Mangistau, and many small shallow bays, among which are Agrakhan, Buzachi, Tub-Karagan, Mangistau, etc. peninsulas exist. The largest islands of this part of the sea are Tyuleny and Kulaly. One of the characteristic features of the northern Caspian coast is the low ripeness of the coastal underwater slope and the presence of a drying (watt) zone formed because of expulsion and wave activity.

Aerospace observation of the level fluctuations of the Caspian Sea off the coast of Baku involves identifying several geographical, economic, and environmental parameters and assessing their impact on various sectors of the economy. Baku is not only the largest city on the Caspian Sea, but also has a high concentration of urbanization and production. From this point of view, the impact of the Caspian Sea on the city and its functional capabilities, as well as the study of the interaction of the social, economic, and ecological situation with the marine ecosystem, are of great importance.

Monitoring of the degree and quality of pollution of atmospheric air by transport and industrial wastes in the urban and suburban zones, intensive population settlement, management and disposal of household waste, research and forecasting of existing problems of the oil and gas sector and fisheries, as well as the study of agricultural development opportunities, should be carried out directly in parallel with the Caspian Sea research. The mentioned factors, especially the greenhouse effect of the fuel and energy sector, are observed on the Azerbaijani coast of the sea. Thus, this area accounts for 75% of emissions, which characterizes local-scale microclimate changes. Exposure to industrial wastes of water flowing from land, including precipitation brought by circulating air masses in the water balance of the sea, disrupts the hydrometeorological regime of the basin and leads to discrepancies in its component balance.

The development of shipping and port economies in Baku, including the increase in the use of the Caspian for tourism, are additional parameters that can affect the marine ecosystem. The reconstruction of the port of Baku and the construction of a new commercial seaport in Alat, the construction of tourist facilities around the sea accelerates this process. To these parameters, it is possible to add that there is a lack of information on the actual volume of waste discharged into the sea and the surrounding area.

Agroclimatic features and phenological conditions of Baku allow here to engage in dry subtropical agriculture and use as winter quarters in animal husbandry. However, the process of intensive industrialization, which began in the second half of the 19th century, reduced the share of agriculture in the production chain, this area fell to the level of individual farms. Comparison of the economic volume of industrial and agricultural (crop production and livestock) products makes it possible to form a certain idea of their share in the city's GDP. Thus, in the past years, the economic indicator of the total volume of agricultural products amounted to 0.26% of the same indicator of industrial anointing.

Efficient use of water in the farm and protection of water resources play an important role in the economy and sustainable management of the city. The effectiveness of projects that are constantly being implemented in this area, unfortunately, from time to time raises various questions. Thus, water losses during the period under study were minimal in 2005-2007 and 2012-2014, 2003, 2008, 2010, 2015 and 2019, however, it can be observed that the local maximum has been reached. The volume of water loss is still increasing today. In addition, the discharge of unused and wastewater into the Caspian Sea not only disrupts the ecological balance of the basin but also contributes to the salinization of the coastal area, the withdrawal of sea water, and the formation of unsuitable zones in its place.

One of the main consequences of intensive industrialization of Baku City is qualitative degradation and pollution of atmospheric air. It should be noted that in this regard, the city of Baku differs from other regions and is considered a region with a tense ecological environment. In recent years, waste manage-

ment and disposal, as well as the acceleration of the transition to waste-free and ecofriendly production technologies, have led to a decrease in the total annual concentration of harmful substances released into the atmosphere. This trend is especially observed in the concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO2). Thus, compared to 2010, the average annual concentration of nitrogen dioxide decreased by 46% to 48 mcg/m3. The concentration of sulfur anhydride (SO2) has also been reduced by more than 2019 compared to the maximum indicator for the decade in 30%, amounting to 23 mcg/m3. The lack of regularity in measuring the average annual concentration of PM10 dispersed powder at automatic stations makes it difficult to accurately observe this indicator.

However, the implementation of practical work to capture and neutralize pollutants plays an important role in the internal self-organization of the urboecosystem and the restoration of its ecogeographic balance. Since 2016, the intensification of the disposal of harmful substances has been continued, and this work has a positive dynamic.

All these are important indicators for the preservation of the environmental safety of the city, as well as for the protection of the Baku-Caspian Sea relations from transformation. The mathematical-statistical analysis of the data will play an important role in determining the environmental friendliness of the economic structure and specialization in the future, as well as in optimizing the territorial organization and management.

The carried-out aerospace observations and their analysis made it possible to determine the presence of factors of natural and anthropogenic origin affecting the current level of fluctuations in the Caspian Sea. Given the geological-geomorphological structure and climatic features of the Caspian Sea, the impossibility of predicting level fluctuations in the long term makes sustainable use of coastal areas especially dangerous for economic purposes. Thus, several buildings in the coastal zone will be in danger of being flooded if the fluctuations of the last century are repeated in the coming years. In addition, direct or indirect contact of sea waters with the foundations of structures will undermine their stability to natural processes (earthquakes, landslides, etc.).

Considering the mentioned factors, the following proposals are put forward:

1. Creation of a buffer zone (a strip without human settlement and economic activity) along the coast to increase the stability of buildings and structures and their stability to natural processes, as well as to ensure the safety of the population and settlements during possible transgressions.
2. Compliance of level measurements on the coast, islands, and at sea with modern standards; integration and analysis of collected data into a single database; as well as conducting seismic and seismoacoustic studies to observe neotectonic mobility.
3. Reduction of anthropogenic load of Baku City and establishment of regional centers in economic regions.
4. Level fluctuations and implementation of the Caspian Sea Research in cooperation with the regional states in the conditions of mutual consultation and monitoring.
5. Ensuring that ships and boats can approach the coast using modern technologies so that the port economy can continue to operate at a possible level dynamic.
6. Implementation of advanced measures to restore the marine ecosystem.

Keywords: level fluctuations, sustainable development, palaeohydrological reconstruction, Baku, ecofriendly production techniques

Gasimova Tezegul, Fatullayeva Sadagat

The political-philosophical view of the formation of the control system defining social order and standards of behavior

Abstract

It wouldn't be incorrect to argue that the needs of the modern world define the topic's relevancy. Contemporary society embodies the principal characteristics of social management, which are marked by the significance of expansion in numerous spheres of human endeavor. During historical evolution, society as a whole arises and grows, establishing norms for social interactions, behavior, and interpersonal relationships based on objective regularity. Major subsystems are responsible for preserving this integrity. Consider society as a totality. Within it, the system of social control is a subsystem that safeguards and governs it. Studying the current strategies and mechanisms for preserving social order and societal cohesion is known as social control. These systems establish and uphold behavioral norms for every individual in the community. Various ideas, including shame, coercion, force, constraint, and persuasion, are included in these behavioral standards. Most areas of social management, including families, state organizations, companies, and schools, use social control. The goal of social control, regardless of its origin, is to uphold adherence to accepted standards and guidelines and to discourage deviance from them. Sociologists use terms and concepts related to social control. Nonetheless, this idea is frequently applied in numerous domains at the research level. In the vast field of sociology, social control encompasses both macro and microelements. The goal and efficiency of formal mechanisms like the police, the law, and punishment are among the key ones connected to macro social control forces. Microsocial control includes socialization. The study of the concept of social control can be found in the works of social philosophers such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Rossouw, as well as classical social theorists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Even today, the concept of social control is an issue that attracts the attention of researchers and scientists. Society, social order, and discipline continue to shape and refine our existing understanding of how it is maintained and the conditions for doing so. Society has its demand for this process. It wouldn't be incorrect to argue that the scientific endeavors of the aforementioned individuals have advanced the domain of social control and order preservation. Numerous contemporary theories of social control owe their roots to these investigations. For the majority of people, conforming to current standards and values is a lifelong endeavor. It might be argued that the majority of them voluntarily acclimate to this compatibility. Here he draws attention to the idea that Parsons claims that socialization is at the heart of this »ready fit«. That is, socialization within institutions such as family and education helps individuals internalize the norms and values of a society, and this process of socialization leads people to believe that a »good person« is someone who willingly conforms to society's rules. To understand the social control system, it is necessary to know its basic elements. Which includes customs, habits, and a system of sanctions. The way of behavior, the elements of behavior determined by moral values create standards of behavior. One aspect that stands out in the setting of this problem is social control in power and administration. To be more specific, it can be said that one of the forms of power and management is social control, and it is the most important part of the organization. The social control system ensures the behavior required and expected of the members of society. Social control begins with socialization.

That is, during this process, the individual can master his social position. And it functions as required [3]. Sometimes this process can be implemented in the form of internal control of a person's behavior. Three tools are used in the implementation of social control: 1) Coercion, application of sanctions; 2) effective activity and socialization; 3) political, financial, legal, moral, and other forms of responsibility. These forms of responsibility include cultural values, traditions, and group norms. Scholars also point out that if society moves toward civil society, the effectiveness of social control becomes fully apparent. [2, s. 95-98]. One of the important conditions for the development of any society is the presence of a strong and successful control system. This control system is needed to ensure the normal, orderly development of society. The development of the control system and society is proportional. That is, as a society, which is a dynamic system, develops, the norms, values, and traditions that are its main elements also develop, change, and renew. Every member of the society wants to live and work in a calm, comfortable environment, in order. It is the presence of a strong social-control institution and system that gives all these to people. The stronger and faster this institution of control develops, the more society and its individuals will develop and improve. The system of social control is also a system of methods and strategies. If the control is carried out by a person, then this control is called individual control, but if the control is carried out by an institution, it is called social control. That is, the scope of this concept is wide. It regulates the individual's behavior, socialization, and activities within the framework of normal values. With the help of the institution of social control, conditions for social stability are created and maintained in every society. That is, the activity of this system is directly related to power and management. Social norms form the basis of the social control system. Social norms prevail in political, economic, social, and cultural fields. If there is a normal, orderly society, if it exists, it means that there are already social norms accepted by the members. Another element of the social control system is sanctions. This includes punishments for breaking the rules and rewards for following them. Another aspect to be considered is that a more positive result can be achieved if social control is implemented collectively rather than individually. No society can do without social control. Even a small group of people gathered together by chance will have to develop their control mechanisms in order not to disband in the shortest possible time [1].

Social control is the protector of society. That is, the social control system protects values and ensures stability. Saying has two roles: protective and stabilizing. Types of social control can be distinguished, such as administrative control, public control, and group control. As we mentioned above, social control is a dynamic system. Every state wants to have this dynamic system. This dynamic model includes elements such as individual, social unity, individual activity, and social activity. Each society forms this system to maintain order within itself. With the help of this system, the movement of people is monitored and regulatory methods are applied for this. At the same time, this system helps the members of the society to understand the cultural norms. The application of the social system to all spheres of society indicates the development of the protective system. Each society develops a certain system of control that systematizes and regulates people's behavior, which consists of formal and informal ways and contributes to the maintenance of social order. Informal control is carried out by family, relatives, friends, and colleagues, that is, using methods such as informal reprimand, explaining, guiding, and teaching. Official supervision is carried out by the court, police, special services, law enforcement agencies, and other competent institutions through the activities of the state supervisory bodies. To put it simply, the social control system is a mechanism aimed at making people follow the rules and punishing them within the framework of the law to maintain peace and order in society, and this is also implemented by the state. That is, the control system is the protective apparatus of the state.

Keywords: social management,social control, behavioral norms, socialization

Roya Amirova

Digital twins: a catalyst for sustainable manufacturing and enhanced state finances

Abstract

This article explores how digital twins can drive sustainability and enhance state finances within manufacturing processes. Digital twins, virtual representations of physical assets, offer unprecedented insights into product performance, energy consumption, and environmental impact. By leveraging digital twins, manufacturers can optimize resource allocation, reduce waste, and improve overall efficiency. Additionally, the data generated by digital twins can be used to inform government policies, support sustainable development initiatives, and enhance the fiscal role of the manufacturing sector. The article will delve into specific use cases, discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing digital twin technology, and outline strategies for maximizing its benefits for both industry and society.

Keywords: digital twins; sustainable manufacturing; Industry 4.0; state finances; economic digitalization

Kseniia Gromova, Borut Rončević

Development of a Successful Industrial Locality: Social Fields Analysis

Abstract

We live in a global and mutually interconnected world where some industrial localities thrive and others lag behind. The reasons for localities' success and failure are continuously explored, and various policies are being implemented to promote industrial development. Yet, they remain somewhat elusive for both scholars and policy-makers. It is generally accepted that industrial development has a solid locational component, including not only physical-spatial aspects but also social, institutional and cultural dimensions. In this paper, we present Social-Fields-Approach (SOFIA) to explore a successful industrial locality. We analyse industrial locality as a social field that is shaped by the three social forces: institutions, social networks and cognitive frames. Institutions limit the scope of actions, by encouraging some and discouraging others. Social networks position individuals and collectives in social space, thus limiting or encouraging ties between specific nodes and 'lubricating' the development of industrial networks. Lastly, cognitive frames provide the necessary mental toolkit, which allows the interpretation and incorporation of strategies leading to the success or failure of the industrial locality.

We demonstrate the SOFIA approach with the help of a comparative multiple case-study of three distinct industrial localities: Novo mesto (Slovenia) - an industrial centre that has been thriving since the 1950s and has more than successfully steered through post-socialist transformation; Pernik (Bulgaria), a case of a formerly industrialised locality which has suffered through post-socialist transformation and has not yet recovered; Aalborg (Denmark), an example of a formerly troubled region with heavy industry, which transformed itself in recent decades into a robust IT cluster. The research opts to demonstrate that the success or failure of a specific industrial locality to adjust to global challenges essentially depends on its ability to arrange the three outlined social forces.

The primary contribution of the research to the existing theory and practice, particularly within the field of regional studies, lies in providing new insights about the reasons for the uneven geography of industrial development through the new application of the SOFIA conceptual framework, wherein the industrial locality is construed as a social field, whose rapid success or slow-growing industrial awakening depends on the combined impact of the three social forces. Moreover, the selected sample and framework may become a foundation for further research to illustrate the policy recommendations for developing the region's innovative potential.

Keywords: industrial locality, industrial development, Social-Fields-Approach (SOFIA), social forces, industrial transformation

Deepika Anshu Bara

Indian Institute of Technology Dhanbad (India): Bridging the Digital Divide: The Impact of Digitalization and Cashless Economy on Tribal Communities in Rural Jharkhand, India

Abstract

The rapid digitalization of financial systems globally has profound implications, especially for rural and tribal communities in India. This study explores the effects of transitioning to a cashless economy on the tribal population in the Kanke block of Ranchi district, Jharkhand. Despite national initiatives like Digital India aimed at fostering digital inclusion, significant challenges persist due to disparities in technological access, literacy, and infrastructure. Through a mixed-method approach, involving both quantitative and qualitative analyses of data collected from 375 respondents, this research highlights the limited adoption of digital payment systems among tribal populations. The findings underscore the socio-economic barriers that hinder the integration of these communities into the digital economy. The study concludes that while digitalization has the potential to enhance financial inclusion and uplift socio-economic conditions, the success of such initiatives hinges on addressing the deep-rooted structural challenges faced by marginalized communities. The research contributes to the discourse on inclusive development and offers policy recommendations for bridging the digital divide to ensure equitable access to the benefits of a cashless economy in rural India.

Keywords: Digitalization, Cashless Economy, Tribal Communities, Rural Development, Financial Inclusion, India

Erika D. Uršič, Alenka Pandiloska Jurak, Urška Fric, Jelena Topić Božič, Simon Muhič, Janez Kolar

Advancing Circular Economy in Slovenia: a systematic review of Industrial Symbiosis Networks and their Opportunities

Abstract

This research reviews the development and strengths of Industrial Symbiosis Networks (ISN) in Slovenia, which is crucial for transitioning to a Circular Economy (CE). Industrial Symbiosis (IS), as one of the tools for implementing a CE, promotes the collaborative use of resources, energy, and waste among industries, enhancing resource efficiency and reducing environmental impact.

However, challenges such as inadequate regulatory support, underdeveloped markets for secondary raw materials, financial constraints, lack of awareness, and data-sharing issues hinder IS adoption. This article systematically reviews CE opportunities to enhance IS, including examples, digital platforms, eco-industrial parks, and government initiatives, using the PRISMA model (Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis). By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities, Slovenia can further integrate IS into its industrial framework, advancing its CE goals.

This analysis provides a foundation for future research and policy development in Slovenian Industrial Symbiosis.

Keywords: Industrial Symbiosis, Networks, Circular Economy, Resource Efficiency, Slovenia

B. Baris Yildiz, Gizem Dak, Münevver Cetin, Denitsa Hinkova

Industry 4.0 Teacher Awareness: Avcilar district example

Abstract

This research aims to determine the level of awareness of teachers about Industry 4.0 in public schools and whether teachers' Industry 4.0 awareness levels differ significantly according to their gender, age, level of employment, professional seniority, branch, educational status and class size of the school they work in. The population of the research, which was conducted using the quantitative method, consists of all teachers working in public schools in Avc?lar district of Istanbul. The sample consists of 1697 teachers selected by random method from the study population in the 2020-2021 academic year . Data were collected using the Industry 4.0 Awareness Scale developed by Yelkikalan , Temel and Özcan (2012). The results obtained in the research are as follows: Teachers' awareness of Industry 4.0 is at a high level. In addition, while there are statistically significant differences in teachers' Industry 4.0 awareness levels according to their gender, age, educational level, and class size of the school they work in, there is no significant difference in terms of their branches and school levels.

Keywords: Industry 4.0, 4th industrial revolution, information society

Florin Nechita, Elena Reghina Nechita, Georgiana Nechita

Bridging Learning and Practice: Project-Based Learning and Working Life Connected Initiatives at Transilvania University of Brașov

Abstract

We rely on education as a main component of modern civilization. As instruction methods, problem--based and project-based learning differ in that problem-based learning emphasizes the learning process, while project-based learning requires a final product. Project based learning is important as it enhances employability through networking and real-life collaboration in a non-abstract setting with all stakeholders involved. The study explores the impact of project-based learning (PBL) and working life connected (WLC) projects on the development of students' communication skills at Transilvania University of Braƀov (UNITBV), Romania. Focusing on the Transilvania Creative Camp (TCC), it examines participants' skills and experiences through collaborative projects with international universities. Through various strategies to interpret and promote cultural heritage via social interaction, TCC demonstrated how PBL principles, particularly in marketing communication, fostered collaborative leadership. The study draws on data from three editions of the TCC summer school (2014, 2016, and 2023) to show how academic learning in communication emerged from addressing real-world challenges into an international cooperation setting. Despite the extracurricular nature of these projects, the findings suggest potential integration into formal communication curricula. The study also underscores the significance of co-creation processes with local stakeholders for WLC/PBL destination marketing projects. Additionally, it highlights two other PBL and WLC initiatives at UNITBV's Faculty of Sociology and Communication: the Dracula Digital and HEIComp projects.

Keywords: project-based learning; working life connected projects; cultural heritage; extracurricular projects; collaborative learning

Edit Lezha, Eranda Bilali (Halluni)

Students' perception on challenges of digital learning

Abstract

Technology and auxiliary teaching includes many tools that serve to help students to get information, to organize their thinking, and to demonstrate their learning. This study presents a mixed research design based on the understanding of the challenges that students face of using technology to facilitate their learning process. Integration is determined not by the amount or type of technology used but by how and why it is used. In order to realise the objectives of today's educational system, which aim at the inclusion of ICT in teaching, it is obvious the necessity for more detailed compilation of university syllabi and with a non-semester but annual academic scope in order to integrate more quickly and easily the elements of digital competences with the elements of the curriculum based on the needs of the students.

Keywords: didactic, ICT, student, digital learning, challenges

Lanbon, John Biitian

Teachers' Pedagogy Continuum and its Impact on ICT Education for the Visually Impaired in Ghana

Abstract

The Teacher's Pedagogical Approach (TPA) plays a significant role in ensuring that classroom instructions are carried out smoothly. However, different topics demand a different pedagogical approach, especially when teaching the blind and the visually impaired (B&VI) learners due to their handicaps. The objective of the paper is to explore the best pedagogical practices and methodologies that ensure that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is taught effectively in the schools for the blind and visually impaired in Ghana. The paper reviews both contemporary and contextual literature on TPA and classified the various pedagogies under two main teaching approaches, namely; Teacher-Centered Pedagogy (TCP) and Learner-Centered Pedagogy (LCP). The paper addresses the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) framework as the basis for the recommended pedagogy for teaching ICT in the schools for the blind. The review shows that even though Learner-Centered Pedagogy (LCP) is recommended in the global classroom, however, most teachers globally still prefer the Teacher-Centered Pedagogy (TCP) for classroom instruction. The paper showed that currently, there is a paradigm shift in curriculum for the basic schools in Ghana from Teacher-Centered Pedagogy (TCP) to Learner-Centered Pedagogy however, the teachers in the schools for the blind are yet to fully adopt this initiative. This because these schools are saddled with a myriad of challenges making difficult to adopt this initiative. To reverse this situation calls for massive in-service training on pedagogy for teachers to make teaching and learning of ICT easy and relevant for the B&VI. Colleges of Education are recommended to emphasize more on learner-centered pedagogy to ensure that teachers are able to teach effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Blind and Visually Impaired, Expanded Core Curriculum, Teacher-Centered, Learner-Centered, High Order Thinking Skills and Low Order Thinking Skills

Nocenzi Mariella, Dominici Piero

Transversal Transitions in Sustainable Education: first evidence from the SUSEDI Project - Route to Transformation of Educational Institutions through a Holistic Approach to Sustainability

Abstract

This proposal aims to present the first results of the project Route to Transformation of Educational Institutions through a Whole Institution Approach to Sustainability [Sustainability in Educational Institutions], funded by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and aimed at entirely rethinking every educational institution (formal, nonformal and informal) with the goal of imprinting it inte-grally to be "sustainable."

One of the main challenges for such a research-action pathway is the ongoing digital transformation, which occurs sometimes accompa-nying, sometimes standing in the way of the social change induced by the affirmation of sustainable education. In fact, according to the Whole Institution Approach adopted in the project, educational institu-tions of all levels and types play a threefold role in the process of real-izing a sustainable future: a) social: developing the awareness and cul-ture of sustainability in the community and collaborating with it to achieve the goals of sustainable development; b) pedagogical: develop-ing sustainability competencies in students, educators, and all stake-holders through the integration of these competencies into the curricula and experimentation with innovative training and learning techniques; c) organizational: by making their operations and structures sustaina-ble, IEs become "role-playing institutions," contributing to sustainabil-ity in general by providing a coherent learning environment and be-coming living models of sustainability practices for students.

From the integrated analysis of the three pillars of sustainable edu-cation through the adoption of WIA, we derive strengths and weak-nesses and also possible opportunities and threats, many of them relat--ed to the digital transition. In particular, the research reflected on their determination by assuming the current one as a Society-Mechanism, founded on hyper-speed, automation, rationality and total control, an increasingly advanced civilization that finds in technoscience and technocracy the sociocultural infrastructures of a civilization (precise-ly) increasingly determined and convinced that it can eliminate Error and unpredictability from processes, systems, ecosystems, and life. And, such a civilization, increasingly programmed and automated in every aspect and innervated with simulation processes (=efficiency/control), as well as delegating everything to technology (=simplification/facilitation), cannot but rely exclusively, solely and only, on those technical knowledge and skills that appear most capable of confirming and reinforcing that collective image and imaginary. Supported by the digital and its increasingly evident pervasiveness, the extraordinary scientific discoveries have triggered processes of com-plex synthesis between "worlds" and between systems that, in the past, appeared and, above all, were recognized as clearly distinct and sepa-rate. These are processes, non-linear and unpredictable, capable of re-composing fractures and separations that are, above all, epistemologi-cal and related to the system of thought. Technology (which is culture), in the meantime, has become more and more a protagonist in the syn-thesis of new values and criteria of judgment. A series of challenges, for the human being and the hegemonic architectures of knowledge and skills, which are, before any other dimension, above all precisely educational as is well evident when Sustainable Education requires adapting ideas, content, structures

and tools to the interdependence of the human species with others, of culture with nature. Precisely in edu-cational models can be read the scope of these challenges for their function of transmitting values and goals between generations, but also for the transformative action they induce. Among these, that of re-thinking/redefining the centrality of the Person and the Human within environments and ecosystems that are increasingly hyperconnected and interdependent, but, at the same time, increasingly marked by fragmentation and fragility of the social bond. Environments and eco-systems in which there is no longer any boundary/boundary between nature and culture, between natural and artificial, between thought and action, between real and virtual.
Early research findings show, therefore, how the newest technolo-gies applied to education offer immense potential for sustainability, but careful planning, ethical considerations, and ongoing teacher develop--ment are essential for its successful integration. In particular, it will emphasize how the transformative force in education, impacting learn-ing experiences, administrative tasks, and personalized feedback of the newest technologies improves collaborative teacher-student learning, intelligent tutoring systems, automated assessment, personalized learn-ing and, so learning outcomes, efficiency, and global access to quality education. But this is at the cost of abandoning supremacies over nature and other species, as well as the most vulnerable among humans (poor, women, disabled, cultural minorities, migrants, unemployed etc.) and, in educational terms, translating this approach into making education a microcosm of sustainability. Among the first practical translations of this approach are those related to the certification mechanisms of EIs, which constitute an applied case study for the theoretical evidence outlined.

Keywords: social change, complexity, transitions, education, sustainability

Hüseyn Orucov

Impact of mentoring programs on student life: Academic and social development

Abstract

Introduction

Mentoring programs are one of the powerful tools for positively influencing the academic and social development of students. Students may sometimes find it difficult to adapt to the challenges they face in academic life and develop their social skills. Mentoring plays an important role in addressing these challenges, as mentors guide students in both academic and personal development. This abstract will look at how mentoring programs affect students' academic and social development and analyze the benefits of these programs in detail.

1. Mentoring Programs and Their Impact on Academic Development

One of the main benefits of mentoring programs is to improve students' academic performance. Mentors help students understand lessons and assignments, motivate them, and provide regular advice. As a result, students can achieve higher academic results.

1.1. Advice and Support

Mentors support students in the educational process, helping them gain new knowledge and develop learning techniques. At the same time, mentors advise students on their study programs and help them overcome difficulties related to the educational process.

1.2. Strengthening Student-Teacher Relationships

Mentoring programs also develop student-teacher relationships. Through their mentors, students form closer relationships with teachers, which has a positive impact on their academic success.

2. Impact of Mentoring Programs on Social Development

Mentorship programs play a major role not only in the academic field but also in the social development of students. Mentors help students develop social skills, feel more confident and make new friendships.

2.1. Personal Development and Self-Confidence

With the support of their mentors, students become more confident and perform better in setting their own goals. Mentoring allows students to understand their potential and to define their future goals more correctly.

2.2. Networking and Building Professional Connections

Mentoring programs help students network and make professional connections on their future career path. The mentors' experience and advice greatly support students in preparing for the professional world, and it expands their social connections.

3. Long-Term Benefits of Mentoring Programs

The effects of mentoring programs are not limited to the lives of students, but also have a positive impact on their future careers and lifestyles. These programs guide students to achieve long-term goals and contribute to their personal development.

3.1. Career Development

Mentoring programs make it easier for students to enter the job market. Thanks to the advice and support of mentors, students can take more successful steps in career development.

3.2. Development of Leadership Skills

Through mentoring programs, students develop leadership skills and gain the experiences they need to be in a stronger leadership position.

The result

Mentoring programs greatly contribute to both academic and social development of students. These programs are very useful in terms of achieving more successful results in the academic field and gaining new skills for personal development. Therefore, students can benefit from mentoring programs to achieve success in both their academic and personal lives.

Keywords: Academic, Social Development, Career advancement, Personal Development, Leadership Skills

Janja Mikulan

Online radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Comparing Islamist and far-right extremists

Abstract

This paper examines the distinct yet interconnected phenomena of online radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), with a focus on two primary groups: Bosnian foreign fighters, primarily associated with Islamist extremism, and far-right extremists, linked to nationalist and ethno-religious ideologies. Despite BiH's relatively small size, the country has become a significant hub for the spread of extremist ideologies online, shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, socioeconomic, and geopolitical factors.

The rapid expansion of the internet and modern digital platforms has enabled extremists to reach wider audiences. However, the mechanisms behind online radicalization remain largely unclear (Conway 2017; Molmen and Ravndal 2021). Although no established theoretical model of online radicalization exists, this paper provides an overview of the main mechanisms considered particularly relevant for explaining online radicalization across different phases: compensation, isolation, facilitation, acceleration, echoing, and action triggering (Molmen and Ravndal 2021).

In the second part, the study explores key trends in online radicalization among Bosnian foreign fighters and far-right extremists, highlighting the differences and similarities in their narratives, ideological motivations, recruitment tactics, and online behaviors. Islamist extremism in BiH has largely been driven by the global jihadist narrative, with online platforms and radical influencers (Metodieva 2023) playing a significant role in recruiting Bosnian foreign fighters who joined the Islamic State (IS). For example, visual propaganda by IS illustrates how extremist groups create an idealized, utopian narrative to attract recruits (Atlantic Initiative 2021).

Simultaneously, ultranationalist, racist, and xenophobic ideologies are increasingly becoming mainstream in society, aided by mainstream social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Far-right groups engage in historical revisionism, promote ethnonationalism, and invoke victimization narratives to resonate with individuals' sense of injustice or grievance (Veljan 2024), fostering a system of reciprocal radicalization between these extreme ideologies.

Keywords: Online radicalization, mechanisms, BiH, Islamist extremism, Far-right extremism

Andrej Omulec, Jožica Pongrac

Addressing Mental Health Needs of Marginalized and Vulnerable Populations

Abstract

The pitfalls of today's parental and social education are reflected in the sphere of preoccupation with digital content, which children are not able to regulate and are consequently absorbed by this type of content. For this reason, they become restless and are not interested in other activities, they do not distinguish between fiction and reality, they begin to live in a virtual world that is full of idealizations and a sense of omnipotence, which results in a reduced sense of empathy and morality. Without adequate supervision by authorities, children are not equipped with a sense of proper use of digital devices and content.

Marginal and vulnerable groups, which include not only children but also their parents and grandparents, are additionally liable to this type of problems. These individuals are namely less equipped with constructive education models and abilities of their own self-regulation. Therefore, in can be noted in the psychotherapeutic processes, that individuals from these groups are not able to regulate children's emotions and cannot control their behavioral situations.
In the present paper, we will present the dynamics of the parents and children from marginal and vulnerable groups, including children and adolescents who were, due the different circumstances taken form the parents and placed in educational institutions or foster families. We will in more detail present the effect of the psychotherapeutic processes at establishing more functional family structure, partners relationship dynamics and on the regulation of children's affects.

The aim of the paper's presentation is to bring participant closer to the understanding of the dynamics that are created within marginal and vulnerable groups through the use of digital content. Emphasis will be places on empathy, delimitation of family and relational dynamics, and strategies for managing the appropriate use of digital means and content.

Keywords: empathy, regulation, digitalisation, family dynamics

Edina Šifrar, Emil Karajić

Telepsychiatry, telepsychotherapy and online psychosocial counselling

Abstract

In the modern world, telepsychiatry is a concept that is increasingly present and important as a branch of telemedicine. Telemedicine has provided advantages for patients and professionals in this field, such as faster and easier access to necessary services. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the adoption of telepsychiatry as healthcare systems and providers adapted to social distancing measures and lockdowns. The newly created conditions led to a growth in the development of applications that enabled the various branches of telemedicine to adapt more effectively to the new conditions. The spread of the pandemic led to crisis situations and mental distress in the general population, which significantly increased the demand and need for telepsychotherapy and online psychosocial counseling as an essential part of telepsychiatry. These two key components of telepsychiatry require a special approach and attention from experts in the field. In-depth recognition of the advantages and management of the limitations of the implementation of these services is necessary in order to avoid the pitfalls that may arise and which may represent potential dangers for the clients who use them. Therefore, in our contribution, we will present the key guidelines that must be followed when offering this type of psychosocial support to a vulnerable population.

Keywords: Telepsychiatry, COVID-19, telepsychotherapy, online psychosocial counseling

Petra Škabar

AI in Mental Health: Addressing Burnout and Redefining Human Roles Amidst Digital Transformation

Abstract

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into mental health services is rapidly advancing and brings both promising opportunities and complex challenges. This paper investigates the role of AI, particularly large language models (LLMs), in addressing professional burnout among mental-health workers — a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Despite the potential benefits of AI in enhancing accessibility and scalability of mental health interventions, its impact on the therapeutic process and therapists' well-being requires careful consideration. The current research gap lies in understanding how AI-driven solutions might reshape traditional therapeutic roles and interactions. This paper conducts a comprehensive review of existing studies to evaluate how AI can alleviate the burdens associated with administrative tasks, supervision, and emotional support. The findings suggest that AI could effectively mitigate burnout and enhance patient care. However, it also raises important questions about how professional roles and human interactions within therapy might be reshaped. By exploring these aspects, this paper contributes to the wider discourse on digital transformation and its impact on mental health services.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Professional Burnout, Digital Transformation, Mental Health Care, AI-driven Interventions

Emil Karajić

The Role of Telehealth Services in Supporting LGBTQ+ Mental Health in the Post-COVID Era

Abstract

LGBTQ+ individuals face unique mental health challenges in comparison to heteronormative populations, due to social stigma, discrimination and persistent stress. Thus a disproportionately higher prevalence of mental health problems and disorders had been observed in the Queer community (QC) for the past several decades. This prevalence has worsened during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

The pandemic presented a unique set of challenges for mental health professionals to deliver services to populations in heightened need, such as the LGBTQ+ population. The QC were stuck at home with unsupportive or even hostile family members, during the quarantine. Many isolated from their support system, chosen family or mental health service providers. In these circumstances, telehealth services proved to be a vital resource. Now, in the post-pandemic era tele counseling has seen an increased acceptance by professionals, providers and academics alike.

Accessing traditional in-person services may sometimes come with a set of barriers such as geographic isolation, the fear of local exposure or discrimination from healthcare providers, and the need for privacy in unsupportive home environments.Telecounseling offers a safe, confidential, accessible and flexible delivery system of support and mental care to those marginalized in society without the associated risks of in-person visits. The flexibility of telecounseling also makes continuous care more likely, which is essential for maintaining mental health.

LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation, which have all been recently proven to be treatable via telecounseling. Although this field of work and research is still very new, the research findings are promising. In the presented work, we aim to discuss some of the research as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages of telehealth services for marginalized groups.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, Tele counseling, telehealth services, marginalized groups

Nikša Alfirević, Zdenko Klepić, Darko Rendulić

Digital technology and mental well-being of business students in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract

In this paper, we present the results of empirical research conducted on a sample of 173 business students studying at selected universities in Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina. Our research question concerns digital technologies' impact on business students' mental well-being. In the context of digital technologies, we define mental well-being in terms of behavioral patterns, which are not associated with problematic, risky, or addictive usage of major technological platforms.

Those behaviors are operationalized by using the three validated psychological scales, describing the general levels of problematic and risky Internet usage (the brief, 3-item version of the PRIUSS scale), mobile phone problem use (the short, 10-item version of the MPPUS scale) and the social networking addiction (the short, 6-item version of the BSMAS scale).

We examine how mental well-being differs across various student groups, defined by their average screen time and the general attitudes toward digital technologies.

In addition, we explore the differences in digital-related well-being across a range of personal factors (including demographics, educational factors, and civic and political engagement) and students' professional backgrounds.

These preliminary empirical results are discussed in the context of the extant literature on digital transformation in higher education and its potential effects on the behavior of young adults. Based on these empirical insights, we also examine the potential interventions, including personal counseling and psychosocial support to business school students in South East Europe.

Keywords: mental well-being, digital technologies, business schools, student support services, South East Europe

Erika D. Uršič, Janez Kolar, Urša Lamut

Circular Economy Competences gap: the case study of Slovenia

Abstract

Transitioning to a circular economy is crucial for sustainable European Union (EU) development. Its success largely depends on having a workforce with the right competencies.

In Slovenia, aligning with EU sustainability goals requires a thorough understanding of the competence gaps that may hinder this transition. This study investigates the necessary competencies for the circular economy in Slovenia and identifies discrepancies between the skills currently available in the workforce and those required by industry. The main research question guiding this study is: What are the key competencies needed for the circular economy in Slovenia, and how do these competencies compare to those available within the current workforce? A qualitative research approach was employed to address this, including in-depth interviews with business leaders, policymakers, and educators, complemented by a review of relevant literature.

The findings reveal a notable misalignment between Slovenia's educational outcomes and industry expectations, particularly in circular product design, lifecycle assessment, and interdisciplinary collaboration. However, addressing these gaps presents a significant opportunity for Slovenia's progression towards a circular economy. The study recommends targeted educational and training programs, policy interventions and collaborations between industry and academia to better align with EU directives and enhance Slovenia's competitiveness in the EU. This alignment will support the national transition to a circular economy and contribute to broader sustainable development goals, fostering a more competitive and resilient economy.

Keywords: Circular economy, Competence gap, education, industry, Slovenia, Qualitative research

Denitsa Hinkova, Gizem Dak

Smart Sustainable Cities of Gen Z and Millennials: A Foresight on Transformation and Resilience in Europe

Abstract

The paper is addressing the rapid urban development of sustainable smart cities in Europe through the lens of the experience of the new generations (Gen Z and Millennials), as they will shape the future workforce in society - 40-60% till 2030. The comparative analysis of 5 European smart-city case-studies will reveal transformative factors, impacting social processes such as civic participation in local governance, collaborative action in the smart sustainable cities (4.0), adapting capacity and democratic resilience. The foresight analysis will provide a scenario-based model for the future of social transformation in the European perspective, especially with a focus on Eastern Europe. The presentation of the impact of Millennials and Gen Z for the transformation towards smart cities in Europe will be based further on data, surveys and recent research on youth civic engagement, commitment to the common good, inclusive participation in decision-making and equal access to opportunities. The next generations' digital skills and sustainability dedication through collaborative networking, civic participation in digital platforms, applications for collective action and crowdsourcing, will recreate the common sense of belonging, shared values, and beliefs in society. Finally, the paper is addressing the attitudes and visions of the next generations for their role of in the process of positive social transformation, that may foster the future adaptive capacity of societies to respond and withstand to the dynamic challenges of people, technology and environment.

Keywords: cities, transformation, sustainability, resilience, Europe

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