

# **Digital Transformation in Higher Education, Part A**

# **EMERALD STUDIES IN ACTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Series Editor: Miltiadis D. Lytras, College of Engineering, Effat University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Filling a significant gap in the body of knowledge related to the emerging agenda of active and transformative learning strategies, Emerald Studies in Active and Transformative Learning in Higher Education is a helpful resource for policy-makers, curriculum designers, and school leaders aiming to develop value-based strategies for promoting quality education with an emphasis on active and transformative learning techniques.

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Active and Transformative Learning in STEAM Disciplines: From Curriculum Design to Social Impact

*Edited by Miltiadis D. Lytras*

# **Digital Transformation in Higher Education, Part A: Best Practices and Challenges**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2024

Editorial matter and selection © 2024 Miltiadis D. Lytras, Andreea Claudia Serban, Afnan Alkhaldi, Sawsan Malik and Tahani Aldosemani.

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83549-481-3 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83549-480-6 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83549-482-0 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This volume is specifically devoted to the individuals who possess exceptional foresight and are at the forefront of implementing and advancing the process of converting traditional education into a digital format within the higher education sector. This work pays tribute to those who successfully combine traditional teaching methods with cutting-edge artificial intelligence as we approach a transformative technological era in education. It is dedicated to educators, students, and leaders who have the courage to innovate and create conditions where technology enhances learning and human potential. May it serve as inspiration to continue the path toward a future where education transcends boundaries and promotes global understanding and cooperation.*

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# Preface

As the 21st century unfolds, the debate on digital transformation is impacting all sectors of society (Alsaywid et al., 2023; Aldosemani, 2023a; Alkhalidi et al., 2023; Şerban & Lytras, 2020). Higher education, a beacon in the knowledge dissemination and creation, is challenged by the entire digital transformation strategy and ecosystem. At this pivotal moment in time, higher education institutions find themselves facing diverse transformative forces, with artificial intelligence (AI) at the forefront, promising to reshape educational landscapes. AI tools like OpenAI ChatGPT can revolutionize education, research, learning, professional development, and accreditation processes. By using these tools, institutions can enhance active and transformative learning experiences. Additionally, they can efficiently manage new challenges, increasing the effectiveness and relevance of education (Lytras, 2023b).

Globalization has transformed all the sectors of economic, social, cultural, political, environmental life, as well as education systems, particularly higher education systems. Traditionally, higher education has been more open to the international context compared to other domains. Education is a key element in shaping the global environment, and it plays a central role in ensuring the economic and social security of a nation (Şerban & Jianu, 2023; Şerban & Lytras, 2023). However, the higher education institutions are being affected differently by the process of globalization. Some of them are passive actors, objects/subjects of globalization, while others are more actively engaged, being key actors of this process. Digital transformation has brought a unique perspective to educational landscape. In this new context, identifying, standardizing, assessing, and rewarding talent, skills, and competencies are imperative (Aldosemani et al., 2019). A strategic approach should align and interconnect value drivers such as research and educational strategy, curriculum development, instructional design, knowledge dissemination, skills management, employment acquisition, and professional growth (Lytras & Alsaywid, 2023).

The acceleration of digital transformation in higher education brings with it a unique set of challenges. One of the greatest is the task of seamlessly integrating advanced technologies, such as AI, into longstanding pedagogical frameworks while preserving the invaluable human element of teaching. Institutions are tasked with fostering environments that promote active and transformative learning, aiming to bridge digital divides and create inclusive progress. Active learning is encouraged through interactive activities, discussion, and collaboration, facilitating effective and flexible learner collaboration in a supportive community, enabling authentic dialogue and learning experiences (Aldosemani, 2023b). Active learning defines a synergistic, collaborative, and exploratory learning, contributing to increased and

long-lasting learning outcome (Lytras & Housawi, 2023). Collaborative knowledge sharing in classrooms enhances active engagement among students and instructors. Exploring the link between innovation and sustainability in education highlights the importance of adapting curriculum and research practices to meet evolving needs (Lytras, 2023a).

The rapid evolution of technology demands a corresponding evolution in our approaches to teaching and assessment, calling for a paradigm shift in educational philosophy (Lytras et al., 2022; Malik & Mantas, 2021). It seems that in the current evolution and development of higher education, there is a crucial need to reinvent the unique value proposition of procedures and strategies toward enhanced student experience and learning outcomes. Considering the increased reliance on digital technologies, addressing digital exclusion is crucial to ensuring equitable access to education and other essential services, thus improving the overall quality of life and reducing societal disparities (Alkhaldi, 2022).

The underlying philosophy of the first volume of our edition centers on the symbiotic relationship between technology and human-centric pedagogy with social foot print (Alkhaldi et al., 2024). Each chapter explores a distinct facet of this digital transformation journey in higher education, guiding readers through the ways in which higher education can embrace digital transformation while remaining substantial in its commitment to student-centric learning and teaching.

Each chapter in this volume navigates a dimension of the digital transformation integration and utilization in higher education.

- **Setting the Emerging Landscape:** This section lays the foundation, charting the pillars of the digital transformation in higher education. It is also about how AI reshapes and re-engineers our educational ecosystems.
- **Threats, Promises, and Strategies:** Here, the authors comment on the potential risks and rewards of digital transformation and AI, contemplating the strategic paths forward.
- **Active and Transformative Learning:** Authors discuss the foundations and the use of AI chatbots in higher education, examining their impact on engaging adult learners in meaningful educational journeys.
- **Inquiry-Based Pedagogical Practices:** The power of AI-driven natural language processing is explored to enhance digital game-based learning, fostering a more inquisitive, exploratory, and personalized educational experience.
- **The Rise of Micro-Credentials:** Authors in these chapters discuss the capacity of micro-credentials that emerge as a novel paradigm, signaling a shift toward more personalized, granular learning pathways in higher education.
- **Deploying AGI:** With the advent of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), authors elaborate on the future possibilities and implications for academia, students, and faculty.
- **Innovative Learning Strategies:** This chapter discusses learning strategies that harness digital tools to revolutionize learning experiences.
- **The AI Revolution 2030:** In this concluding chapter, the authors vision the future and discuss use cases and AI-enabled services that take higher education to the next level of learning capacity and skills building.



In Fig. 1, we provide a graphical overview and synopsis of the coverage of the first volume of our edition.

The successful implementation of a digital transformation (DT) strategy in higher education is indeed multifaceted and complex. It demands robust infrastructure, visionary leadership, and a culture that embraces continuous innovation. However, at the heart of this transformation lies the indispensable human element. This volume emphasizes that DT must be inherently human-centric, creating educational environments that not only impart knowledge but also nurture individuals who will positively impact society.

As we venture into this digital dawn, we hold a dual commitment: to harness the immense capabilities of AI and other advanced technologies and to preserve the essence of education as a human endeavor that enriches both the intellect and the soul. It is through this symbiotic relationship between technology and humanity that we can forge a transformative path forward, shaping a brighter future for higher education and the world it serves.

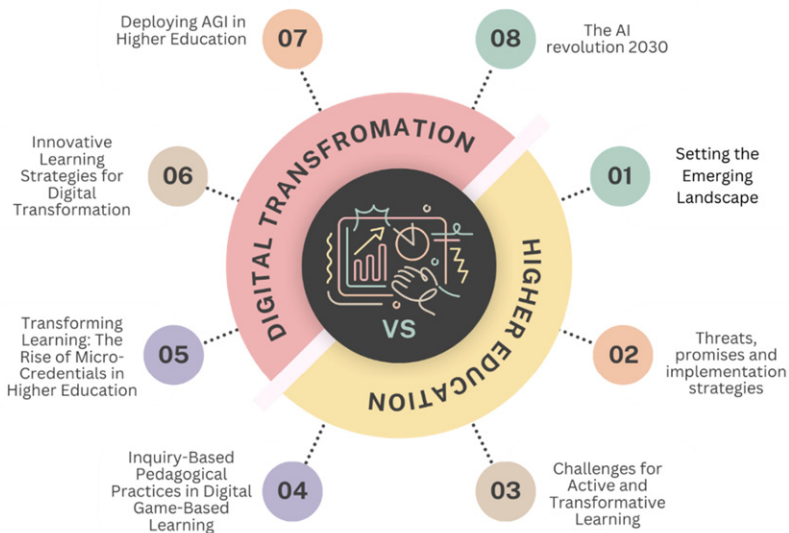


Fig. 1. A Snapshot of the DT Themes, Volume Coverage. *Source:* Authors.

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## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all of our chapter authors for their valuable contributions. It has been a great pleasure and honor to embark on this journey together; we highly appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with experts in the field of digital transformation in higher education. Additionally, we are profoundly grateful to the books team at Emerald Publishing, especially Lydia Cutmore, Kirsty Woods, and Lucy Loveday, for their commitment, professionalism, and continuous support in advancing our project. We also appreciate the meticulous editorial support provided by Pavithra Muthu. Working with each of these individuals has been a privilege, and we are thankful for their support, expertise, shared perspectives, and willingness to share their valuable work and experiences with us.

Furthermore, we acknowledge our colleagues and students who inspired us to initiate this very timely project during a period of rapid changes in higher education.