



To transfer or not to transfer? Digital transformation and the exclusivity of higher education “offline”

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Introduction

The world of higher education is becoming more and more rapidly changing with the implementation of high tech:

- Online master programs are becoming more common.
- We can even see universities completely online.

The widespread diffusion of new digital technologies is ultimately leading to a transformation of organizations as a whole

Why we have decided to conduct this research

There are not enough reliable studies on the topic of the digital transformation of higher education institutions, especially in a long-term perspective, the perception of transformation by the institutional community, and many others.

Being the leader in the educational market in Kyrgyzstan, AUCA decided to conduct a study on the role, development, understanding, and perception of the digital transformation of AUCA.

Literature

Pros and Cons of Online Education: a Few Examples

Pros and Cons	Taylor, R. (2002), "Pros and cons of online learning – a faculty perspective", <i>Journal of European Industrial Training</i> , Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 24-37
Pros	Hargreaves, E. (2005). Assessment for learning? Thinking outside the (black) box. <i>Cambridge Journal of Education</i> . 35(2): 213–224.
Cons	Lisa Chamberlin and Tracy Parish. (2011). MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses or Massive and Often Obtuse Courses? <i>eLearn</i> , 8, <i>Article 1</i>

Methods

- A qualitative study with a single focus group method
- Participants of the FG were specialists connected with digital transformation in different directions in a sphere of Higher Education

Questions

- What do you think is digitalization, digitization, digital transformation, what is the difference between them and how do you see these processes in our institution?
- What exactly should be digitally transformed and why?
- What is the peculiarity of HED in compare with other educational systems and services
 - What is the academic environment?
- The potential expansion of AUCA in the online environment (with an obvious limitation of the physical environment) that we can offer.

Study procedure

- The focus group was conducted when the academic semester was finished to ensure the possibility for participants to spend enough time working in the focus group.
- 14 participants
- The focus group was recorded on audio and video, followed by transcription and analysis of the participants' nonverbal behavior.

Focus Group results

When analyzing the results of the focus group, the main topics were identified and which were subsequently combined into leading discourses:

- Devaluation of higher education in the Kyrgyz Republic
- The fundamental nature of higher education
- Digital transformation is like ...
- Phases of transformation

Conclusion

To transform or not to transform

Focus group participants agreed that:

1. transformation is the natural consequence of the integration of digital instruments and also meets market requirements
2. transformation should not be realized thoughtlessly:
 - Full understanding of goals and benefits of transformation should be identified
 - Strategic plan and road maps should exist
 - Participants including Administration should be prepared
 - All the main components that make higher education unique should be kept

Recommendations

Steps :

1. Open discussion on digital transformation involving top management
2. Inclusion in the strategic development plan of the university

Further research

A comparative study among AMICAL members

Further research into the phenomenon of the digital transformation of HED and HEIs on the example of liberal art higher education institutions.