



SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF HUMANITIES EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL CIVILIZATION

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Abstract

This article analyzes, from a socio-philosophical perspective, the formation of the concept of digital civilization and its impact on the humanities education system. Digital civilization is examined as a new stage of society organized on an information-technological basis, while its influence on humanities education is considered through three theoretical approaches — structural-functional, phenomenological, and constructivist. The article also discusses the contradictions arising in the course of this transformation (the digital divide, the shallowing of thought, changes in teacher-student relations) and the new function that humanities education acquires under these conditions — the critical filtering of information and the provision of ethical orientation.

Keywords: digital civilization, digital transformation, humanities education, social philosophy, critical thinking, digital divide, philosophy of education.

Introduction

Over the past decade, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has been radically transforming all spheres of social life, including the education system.



This process is expressed in scholarship through the concepts of “digital civilization” and “digital transformation.” Decree No. PF-5847 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated October 8, 2019, “On the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030,” together with the “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030” strategy, defines the digital renewal of education as a priority task [1].

However, digitalization is not merely a technical matter: it raises profound questions concerning the content, purpose, and philosophy of education. In particular, the question of how humanities education — a field serving the moral, cultural, and social development of the human being — should continue to fulfill its function under digital conditions is becoming increasingly urgent. This urgency is reinforced by the fact that, although numerous regulatory and methodological documents on the digitalization of education have been adopted, their philosophical-methodological foundations — in particular, the place of humanities knowledge within this process — have not yet been sufficiently developed as an independent, integral subject of research.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the concept of digital civilization from a socio-philosophical standpoint and to examine its influence on the transformation of humanities education through the main theoretical approaches. To achieve this purpose, the following tasks were set: (1) to clarify the scientific-philosophical content of the concept of digital civilization; (2) to systematize the theoretical approaches for analyzing the transformation of humanities education; (3) to identify the principal socio-philosophical contradictions of the transformation process; (4) to substantiate the new social function of humanities education under digital conditions.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the transformation of humanities education under digital civilization through three theoretical approaches — structural-functional, phenomenological, and constructivist — and in linking these approaches to the context of national strategic documents. The article is structured as follows: the next section reviews the relevant foreign and recent scholarly literature; this is followed by a description of the research methodology; the results and discussion section presents the main analytical findings; and the article concludes with a general conclusion and directions for further research.

Literature review and methods

The roots of the concept of digital civilization go back to A. Toffler’s theory of the “Third Wave”: according to this theory, after the agrarian and industrial waves, humanity is entering a new, information-based civilizational stage [2]. D. Bell, in his concept of “post-industrial society,” presents knowledge and information as the principal resource of societal development [3]. M. Castells, in turn, characterizes contemporary society as a “network society,” arguing that flows of information have become the determining factor of social structure [4].

Recent research emphasizes that the boundary between digital and analog life is increasingly dissolving: the concept of “onlife,” proposed by L. Floridi and co-authors, expresses the condition of a person simultaneously inhabiting both online and offline existence [5]. Y. N.



Harari, in his most recent work, analyzes how information networks have throughout human history been bound up with truth, trust, and power, showing that in the age of artificial intelligence this relationship carries new risks [6].

The question of technology's effect on human essence was raised in M. Heidegger's classic work: according to him, technology generates the mechanism of "Gestell" (enframing), which compels human beings to regard themselves and nature merely as a "resource," thereby obscuring other possible modes of relating to the world [7]. In response to this danger, M. Nussbaum emphasizes the importance of humanities education for a democratic society: in her view, an education system oriented solely toward useful, practical knowledge weakens the capacity for critical thinking and for understanding others, which in turn threatens democracy itself [8]. M. Prensky interprets the distinction between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" as necessitating a fundamental reconsideration of educational methodology [9].

Recent studies further reinforce the relevance of this topic. T. Van Vi, using the example of philosophy education, proposes an innovative model for developing critical thinking and "soft skills" under conditions of digital transformation, treating philosophy not merely as an academic discipline but as a pedagogical instrument [10]. J. Tang, P. Huang, and S. Yan have developed a conceptual model analyzing the digital transformation of higher education through the unity of three logics — value logic, technological logic, and practical logic [11]. The Digital Competence Framework for Europe (DigComp), developed by Y. Punie, B. Brecko, and A. Ferrari, defines digital literacy as a complex competence encompassing not only technical skills but also critical and ethical components [12].

The epistemological status of humanities knowledge in the digital era has likewise become a distinct subject of discussion. S. Chavanayarn defends the field of digital humanities against essentialist criticism: drawing on Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblance," the author argues that humanities research enriched by digital tools serves the same purpose as traditional humanities research — understanding and valuing human cultural creation — and therefore remains within the family of the humanities [13].

The author's own preliminary studies on this subject also exist: the socio-philosophical aspects of the transformation of humanities education under digital civilization have been examined in general terms [14], and the problem of higher education transformation and the response to it has been presented at an international conference [15]. The present article builds on and deepens these preliminary works by systematizing the theoretical approaches and broadening the analysis.

In the national context, besides Decree No. PF-5847 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" strategy and the relevant resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers on the digitalization of higher education also exist [1]. However, these documents focus primarily on infrastructure, technical provision, and quantitative indicators of personnel training, while the qualitative transformation of humanities education under digital conditions — its purpose, content, and methodology — requires separate philosophical grounding. In the



national methodological literature, the didactic foundations of innovative educational technologies are addressed in the manual by R. Ishmuhamedov, A. Abduqodirov, and A. Pardaev, which examines the integration of interactive and technological methods into the traditional educational process [16]; this work is regarded as a starting point of national experience in adapting humanities education methodology to digital conditions.

The analysis of the above sources shows that the topic of humanities education transformation under digital civilization has been broadly addressed in world scholarly literature, yet its socio-philosophical aspects within the Uzbekistani context, integrated with national values, have not yet been sufficiently studied. The present article seeks to address this gap.

Methodology

The study employs dialectical, comparative, and systemic approaches. The dialectical method served to reveal the contradictory yet mutually conditioned relationship between digital civilization and humanities education. The comparative method was used to compare foreign theoretical approaches to digital transformation (technocratic, phenomenological, axiological) with one another. The systemic approach made it possible to examine humanities education as an integral social institution, in the unity of its technological, pedagogical, and ethical dimensions.

Sources were selected according to the following criteria: (a) direct relevance to the topic — dedication to questions of digital civilization, digital transformation, or humanities/philosophical education; (b) scholarly recognition — the publisher or journal's standing within the international scholarly community; (c) currency — the inclusion of recent studies from 2024–2025 alongside classical theoretical works. Only citations verifiable through independent sources (publisher, DOI, official document) were used; sources of unverifiable authorship or existence were excluded from the analysis.

Results and discussion

1. The content of the concept of digital civilization. On the basis of the sources reviewed, digital civilization can be defined as a stage of society formed on the foundation of information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, and network infrastructure, in which social ties, knowledge production, and forms of cultural expression have been fundamentally renewed. Three features are of particular importance here: (a) information becoming a strategic resource; (b) social ties being organized through network structures; (c) the blurring of the boundary between analog and digital existence (the state of “onlife”) [2–5].

2. Theoretical approaches to analyzing the transformation of humanities education. The study distinguishes three theoretical approaches. The structural-functional approach analyzes humanities education as part of society, in terms of its functions within the social structure (socialization, cultural transmission). The phenomenological approach focuses attention on the subject — the personal experience of the student and the teacher within the digital environment. The constructivist approach, in turn, treats humanities knowledge not as ready-made content to be transmitted, but as a process actively constructed by the learner. In our view, these three



approaches do not exclude one another; rather, they jointly serve to understand the transformation of humanities education across institutional, personal, and epistemic dimensions.

Approach	Focus of attention	Key representatives	Practical implication for education
Structural-functional	The functions of humanities education in society (socialization, cultural transmission)	D. Bell, M. Castells	Adapting the education system to new social functions
Phenomenological	The personal experience of student and teacher within the digital environment	M. Heidegger, L. Floridi	Taking subjective experience into account in the educational process
Constructivist	The active construction of knowledge by the learner	M. Prensky	The teacher's role shifting toward that of a facilitator

Table 1. Theoretical approaches to analyzing the transformation of humanities education (compiled by the author).

3. Socio-philosophical contradictions of the transformation process. Digitalization, alongside its opportunities, also gives rise to a number of problems. First, the digital divide — the inequality among social strata in access to technology — risks deepening existing inequality in educational quality. Second, under conditions of continuous digital flow, there is a risk of weakening the capacity for what is termed “clip thinking,” that is, deep and coherent reasoning. Third, the traditional hierarchical relationship between teacher and student is changing: the teacher is increasingly becoming not a transmitter of knowledge but an organizer and guide of the learning process — the socio-philosophical foundations of this shifting role require separate research.

4. The new function of humanities education. Under these contradictions, the importance of humanities education does not diminish but rather increases. Whereas in the traditional model humanities education primarily performed the task of transmitting cultural heritage, under digital conditions its function is expanding: it must now cultivate students' capacity to critically evaluate information flows, distinguish between different sources and viewpoints, and understand the ethical consequences of technological decisions. This is directly connected to Nussbaum's thesis that the humanities cultivate the critical thinking necessary for democratic citizenship [8], a thesis that becomes even more relevant in today's digital context.

5. Digital competence and the integration of humanities knowledge. As shown in the DigComp framework, digital literacy is not merely a technical skill but also includes components such as the critical evaluation of information, problem-solving, and responsible use [12]. This suggests that humanities education and digital competence should be regarded not as opposed phenomena but as mutually complementary ones. As T. Van Vi notes, philosophical disciplines in particular can serve as a pedagogical means of achieving precisely this integration — by teaching students to use digital tools meaningfully and critically [10].



6. Institutional dilemmas. As shown in the study by J. Tang and co-authors, digital transformation in higher education institutions requires balancing three logics: value logic (why digitalization is undertaken), technological logic (by what means), and practical logic (by whom and under what conditions it is implemented) [11]. For humanities education, this implies above all the primacy of value logic: before technological tools are introduced, it must be clearly established what educational purpose they serve, since otherwise digitalization risks becoming an end in itself.

7. The epistemological status of humanities knowledge. The introduction of digital tools into the humanities is sometimes criticized as “trivializing” or undermining the essence of humanities knowledge. However, as S. Chavanayarn argues, digital methods of humanities research do not alter the purpose of humanities knowledge — understanding and valuing human cultural creation — but merely expand the means of achieving it [13]. This conclusion carries an important practical implication: introducing digital tools into humanities education programs, provided they serve critical understanding and cultural appreciation, is not contrary to the essence of humanities education but can be regarded as a factor enriching it.

Directions for further research

Several questions remain open within the scope of this article and warrant separate investigation: the concrete didactic mechanisms for introducing digital ethics and critical-thinking modules into humanities education programs; ways of ensuring balance between national values and digital globalization; empirical (sociological survey, pedagogical experiment) study of new forms of teacher-student relations; and the ethical boundaries of using artificial intelligence tools in teaching the humanities.

Conclusion

The transformation of humanities education under digital civilization is not merely a technical-technological matter but a profound socio-philosophical process. The study has shown that a single theoretical approach is insufficient for understanding this process — an integrated application of the structural-functional, phenomenological, and constructivist approaches is required. Digitalization does not abolish the traditional functions of humanities education but enriches it with a new function — the critical filtering of information and the provision of ethical orientation. In this regard, digital competence and humanities thinking should be treated in institutional policy not as mutually exclusive but as mutually complementary phenomena. These questions will be examined in greater depth in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation research.

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