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## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS (BASED ON PRACTICAL STUDIES)**

## **ЦИФРОВАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ В УПРАВЛЕНИИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКИМ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕМ: ВЫЗОВЫ И ИННОВАЦИИ (НА ОСНОВЕ ПРАКТИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ)**

### **Abstract:**

The presented paper examines the implementation of individual educational trajectories and data-driven management in a digital university management system, which improves the efficiency, competitiveness, and quality of educational services. The paper convincingly demonstrates that the transition to management decision-making based on digital data analysis makes it possible to predict academic performance, quality of service to students, and expectations regarding student satisfaction. The work is an active attempt to prove that the creation of a unified digital platform integrating learning management structure, digital libraries, an assessment system, and automated communication models is becoming the guiding principle of educational policy in university management. Our paper provides a critical look at the real-world challenges arising in the digital governance transformation process, such as potential cybersecurity risks, digital imbalance, methodological adaptation shortcomings, and the deficiencies and scarcity of novelty in training infrastructure.

The study reflects and analyzes the objectives and results of the digital survey process conducted within the Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University (BSU) composition of academic staff and students, which clearly demonstrates the innovative capabilities of the

transformative role of digital technologies in the potential of a sustainable higher education system.

**Keywords:** University education, digital education, transformational digital management, electronic research, pedagogical approaches, online learning platform

**Аннотация:**

В данной статье рассматривается внедрение индивидуальных образовательных траекторий и управления на основе данных в цифровую систему управления университетом, что повышает эффективность, конкурентоспособность и качество образовательных услуг. В работе наглядно показано, что переход к принятию управленческих решений на основе анализа цифровых данных позволяет прогнозировать академическую успеваемость, качество обслуживания студентов и ожидания относительно их удовлетворенности. Работа представляет собой активную попытку обосновать, что создание единой цифровой платформы, объединяющей структуру управления обучением, цифровые библиотеки, систему оценки и автоматизированные модели коммуникации, становится руководящим принципом базовой образовательной политики в управлении университетами. В статье представлен критический взгляд на реальные проблемы, возникающие в процессе трансформации цифрового управления, такие как потенциальные риски кибербезопасности, цифровой дисбаланс, методологические недостатки адаптации и дефицит новизны в инфраструктуре обучения.

В исследовании отражены и проанализированы процессные задачи и результаты цифрового опроса, проведенного среди академического состава и студентов Батумского государственного университета Шота Руставели (БГУ), что наглядно демонстрирует инновационный потенциал трансформационной роли цифровых технологий в формировании устойчивой системы высшего образования.

**Ключевые слова:** Университетское образование, цифровая трансформация, электронные исследования, онлайн-платформа обучения, цифровое образование

**Introduction**

In the context of the global digital revolution, the higher education space is undergoing a fundamental transformation, which includes not only the development of technological infrastructure but also a systematic revision of models of knowledge creation, dissemination, and administration [2, p. 370]. Digital management in higher education implies the strategic integration of digital technologies into educational and administrative processes, which is aimed at ensuring student-centered learning, management efficiency, and institutional sustainability [2, p. 374].

Modern universities face a significant challenge - to adequately integrate the rapid changes in digital ecosystems, maintain academic quality, and ensure equal access to educational resources [1, p. 440]. It emphasizes that the effective implementation of technology depends not only on the existence of technical infrastructure, but also on the development of digital competencies of academic staff & students, which is accompanied by a fundamental reform of teaching practices.

This research aims to systematically analyze the digital management process at BSU, evaluate innovative technological solutions, and identify the challenges that accompany the

digitalization of the educational process. Special emphasis is placed on the role of online learning platforms, digital libraries, and electronic administration systems in the process of improving academic quality and student experience. The results of the study will make a significant contribution to both the strategic development of the university and the formation of national education policy [12, p.197], which is aimed at establishing a sustainable and innovative digital education system.

**Topic Relevance:** The relevance of this study is due to the necessity of digital transformation of the modern higher education system and the importance of analyzing the challenges associated with this process. The effectiveness of the university's digital management is directly related to the quality of the educational process, student satisfaction, and, ultimately, the international competitiveness of the university.

The study systematically studies how state universities integrate digital technologies into educational and administrative processes and what challenges they face in this direction. Of particular importance is the research focus on the accelerated process of digital transformation caused by the pandemic and the changes that have remained sustainable in the post-pandemic period.

The results of the study are important for the Georgian higher education system, as this study presents best practices in the integration of digital technologies, existing challenges, and future development prospects using the example of a regional university.

**Research Goal and Objectives:** The main goal of the research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the process of integrating digital technologies at the university and identify the challenges, opportunities, and best practices related to this process. The main objectives are:

- Assessment and analysis of the current level of digital transformation at the university;
- Identification of the main challenges related to the implementation of digital technologies;
- Analysis of existing strategies for solving problems arising in the process of digital transformation; Study of adaptation mechanisms and innovative approaches used by the university;
- Assessment of the impact of the use of digital technologies on the quality and efficiency of the educational process;
- Development of recommendations for improving the university's digital management system.

**Research Methodology:**

The main methodological basis of the present study is an electronic questionnaire as a fast, large-scale, and economical data collection tool, which is widely used in the social sciences to study digital transformation processes [9, p. 355]. A structured questionnaire was developed as a research tool, combining both closed (quantitative) and open (qualitative) discursive questions, which allows for multidimensional data analysis [5, p. 50].

The questionnaire is thematically divided and includes the following research blocks:

- Accessibility and quality of digital infrastructure;
- Frequency and effectiveness of digital technologies;
- Digital competencies and opportunities for their development;
- Challenges and barriers arising in the process of digital transformation;
- Visions and strategic priorities for future development.

Data analysis was carried out using a mixed methods design, which involves the integrated use of both quantitative (statistical analysis, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation) and qualitative (content analysis, content interpretation) methods [9, p. 357]. In addition, qualitative methods were used for in-depth interpretation of the results, including semi-structured interviews, which allow for a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of subjects participating in the digital transformation process [13, p. 40]. According to BSU Georgian Professors, "one of these methods is the 'main criterion method', which we will use later to evaluate the effectiveness of the system for solving the optimization problem", as far as "the methodology is based on the systems risk<sup>1</sup> assessment approach" [10, pp. 140-141]

**Research Results:**

The presented analysis is based on a survey conducted on the university’s digital systems, which was conducted via Google Form. 103 respondents participated. The study aimed to determine users’ attitudes, experiences, and expectations towards the university’s digital systems. Of the 103 respondents included in the survey, by faculty<sup>2</sup>. See the relevant Table<sub>1</sub>.

Question: How often do you use the university's digital systems?

Daily	37.9%
Several times a week	49.5%
Once a week or rarely	10.7%
Never	0,95%
According to the rental	0.95%

According to the survey results, students and staff actively use various digital platforms<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> As it is generally known, digital academic education presents significant risks, including decreased student engagement, reduced face-to-face interaction, and increased distractions from non-educational apps. Key threats involve cyber security breaches, data privacy concerns, and academic integrity issues regarding AI usage. Additionally, technical failures, unequal digital access, and potential, negative impacts on social skills are major concerns [14, p. 25]

The UNESCO document we found analyzes the main risks of digital academic education:

- a) Decreased Engagement and Motivation: A lack of immediate, in-person interaction can lead to reduced student focus, motivation, and, in severe cases, higher dropout rates;
- b) Superficial Learning: The volume of digital information can lead to passive consumption rather than deep, critical thinking; System outages, poor internet connectivity, and platform limitations can disrupt the learning process;
- c) Academic Dishonesty: Increased reliance on AI tools for completing tasks poses risks to academic integrity;
- d) Loss of Practical Skills: Reduced opportunities for hands-on, motor-skill development [14, pp. 27-29]

<sup>2</sup> 54.59% are from the Faculty of Tourism, followed by the Faculty of Business 14.42%, Education 12.36%, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences 9.27%, Natural Sciences and Health 9.27% and Faculty of Humanities 6.18%. The status of the respondents includes both academic/visiting staff 17.5% and administrative staff and students 82.5%. Representatives of various age groups participated in the survey. 76.7% of respondents were aged 18-24, 6.8% of respondents were aged 25-34, 6.8% of respondents were aged 35-44, 6.8% of respondents were aged 45-64, and 2.9% of respondents were aged 65 and over. Respondents’ experience at the university varied from beginners to those with long experience. 74.8% were under 5 years, 10.7% were over 5 years, 5.8% were over 10 years, and 8.7% were over 20 years. Frequency of use Respondents actively use the university’s digital systems, although the frequency of use varies.

<sup>3</sup> such as: student portal 94.3%, followed by e-mail 43.7%, library e-resources 26.2%, artificial intelligence 26.2%, eflow 1% and 5.9% do not specify which electronic platform they use. Digital systems were evaluated according to the following criteria: user friendliness 43.7% rated it with the highest 5 points, 35% -4 points, 18.4% -3 points and only 2.9% rated it with a low rating. Speed and efficiency 26.2% rated it with the highest score, and 43.7% -4 points. Functional diversity 38.8% wrote 5 points, 35.9% -4, 18.4 -3 points. Accessibility 43.7% highest score and technical support 36.9% -5 points.

Main problems named by respondents: technical glitches (system freezes, delays), Internet-related problems, difficulty of some functions, complicated interface, and some think that they see problems in anything. See the relevant Table 2.

Technical problems	65%
Difficult interface	7.8%
Incomplete information	14.6%
Insufficient integration of systems	4.9%
Disrupted operation	6.8%
I have no problems	1%

### Discussion

The need for digital services/functions is lacking/satisfied 27.2%, Internet and technical equipment (internet speed, computers, laptops) 19.4%, access to the study table and schedule 9.7%, notification system/automatic notifications 7.8%, electronic library / e-Books 6.8%, artificial intelligence/digital assistant 5.8%, Moodle/integration of university systems 3.9% virtual laboratories/simulations 2.9%, portal improvement (additional functions, search and interface) 7.8% other different comments 7.8%. When asked how satisfied they feel with the use of the university's digital system, the majority of respondents 67% feel quite comfortable using the university's digital systems. The remaining 33% are moderately satisfied. When asked whether respondents need additional training to better use the system, the answers are as follows: 29.1% believe that it is not necessary, while 65% believe that it is necessary, and the remaining 5.9% expressed a desire to receive more information about the optimal use of the system.

The main strengths of the university's digital systems are simplicity, accessibility, and speed. Students evaluate the system as easy to understand and convenient, which provides timely access to the necessary information. The multifunctionality and centralized structure of the platform allow users to receive all study-related services in one space. Despite certain technical shortcomings, the overall assessment is that the system is effective & simplifies the learning process. The main weaknesses of the university's digital systems are frequent technical shortcomings, delayed system operation, and unreliability of the Internet. Some students also note the difficulty of finding information, the non-user-oriented nature of the interface, and functional limitations. Despite the generally positive assessments, these problems somewhat hinder the full use of the system. Overall assessment: On a 10-point scale, the university's digital systems are rated above average, indicating general satisfaction, but also potential for improvement.15. When asked what recommendations respondents have for improving digital systems, the answers are as follows: Students name as recommendations for improving the university's digital systems the elimination of technical flaws, improvement of the quality of the Internet, smooth and uninterrupted operation of the system, simpler and user-friendly design of the interface, expansion of functional capabilities (e.g. e-mail, chatbox, early access to the schedule), as well as increasing digital literacy through training and instructions. An important direction is the constant updating of the system and consideration of user feedback, which ensures a student-oriented digital environment.

The results of the study show that digital management practices at BSU are actively developing, although they are accompanied by significant challenges, which is in line with the global trends described in modern higher education systems. "This fact is understood as the judgment In-depth of events in the cognitive process and substitution of old knowledge by the

new one" [6, p. 95]. The majority of students and staff generally express a positive attitude towards the university's digital systems, which indicates the perception of the role of digital technologies as an important factor in improving the learning process. And, thus, "about each mode of knowledge is a method through which it can be gained" [4, p. 7]. The use of the student portal and e-mail systems is particularly high, which confirms the growing role of user-oriented services in the center of digital education management, because "a high degree of motivation is associated with the use of computers and the Internet in all the courses" [3, p. 499].

However, the study identified several critical weaknesses, including technical shortcomings, insufficient integration of the system & the need to develop digital competencies. The lack of integration between digital systems significantly complicates administrative & educational processes, which is also noted in other studies as one of the main barriers to successful digital transformation [14, p. 22]. Also, the majority of respondents express the need for additional training, which emphasizes the need for continuous professional development in the digital era [15, p. 77].

An important conclusion is that the sustainable development of the university's digital infrastructure depends on financial resources and long-term strategic planning. This issue fully corresponds to the main challenges identified in recent studies, which are necessary for the sustainability of digital transformation processes [8, p. 82]. The study was also conducted through an interview survey, in which senior managers participated, namely: heads of quality services, IT competent specialists, leading specialists (librarians), heads of case management, career development specialists, and the academic department [9, p. 360]. They answered the following questions:

**1. The stage of the university's digital transformation and key challenges:**

The university is undergoing a digital transformation process, although it is accompanied by several difficulties. One of the important challenges is the improvement of the wireless Internet (Wi-Fi) infrastructure - although the system is already functioning, the increased load requires strengthening its speed and stability. A business continuity project is underway, which envisages connecting the server infrastructure to a generator, which will ensure the continuity of administrative and educational activities [7, p. 330]. It is also important to update the existing examination systems, which are outdated and do not meet modern standards - exams are often still conducted on paper, and the software input of tests is done manually, which increases the risk of information leakage. as contemporary Georgian researchers in digital education note, "it is faculty who are in the forefront of the movement to network education that university administrations & computer companies have decided" [11, p. 24]

**2. The effectiveness of digital systems and identified shortcomings:**

The digital systems existing at the university are partially functional, although there are some questions about their effectiveness. For example, the examination programs are outdated and do not provide a transparent and secure process. The electronic portal and the journal operate separately, which sometimes makes it difficult to exchange information flexibly. The portal lacks functions such as selecting lecturers, adapting schedules to the student's individual schedule, and a fully accessible list of free credits. The digital library is also functioning, although technical glitches occur; in particular, literature is often not downloaded from the portal.

### **3. Integration of digital systems and their impact on daily activities:**

The lack of integration of digital systems is one of the serious challenges at the university. Systems such as the electronic journal, portal, examination program, and document circulation platform are not fully integrated. This leads to administrative difficulties — for example, document reception and upload are often done manually. Also, the compilation of lecture schedules is still done manually by faculty representatives, although it can be automated.

### **4. plans for improving digital infrastructure (2-3 years):**

Plans include the transfer of the university's network infrastructure to a fully fiber-optic Internet, which will significantly improve the quality of the Internet. It is planned to update the design of the university's main website (bsu.edu.ge), although the implementation of this project depends on financial resources. It is also planned to purchase a modern scanning device for the library, which will automatically perform the process of turning and scanning a book. Special attention is paid to the needs of the Faculty of Medicine, including the introduction of an anatomical screen and a digital mold system.

### **5. Successful digital systems and factors determining their success:**

The university portal is considered the most successful in digital management, which was effectively used during the Covid-pandemic period, including the integration of Zoom. Also worth noting is the "Portfolio" system, which combines the decisions of the Academic Council and other important innovations in a single space. Conference systems are also successful initiatives - the university has 5 fully equipped hybrid conference rooms, which provide both local and remote communication. Also, a digital platform "Lecture" has been purchased for the Faculty of Medicine, which combines educational materials, practical assignments, and tests in a single digital system. We believe that the value of the practical studies discussed reflects the main focus of our topic, namely, “Student satisfaction with academic services is a fundamental indicator of quality in higher education, significantly impacting both individual learning outcomes and the overall academic climate” [9, p. 363].

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

From the above-mentioned, we may conclude that the effective implementation of digital management at the university is a complex process that requires both technological and organizational innovations. The scientific experience of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University demonstrates both existing challenges and development prospects in the context of digital transformation in the Georgian higher education system.

Based on the research results of the study, the following recommendations were developed:

- Implementation of an integrated digital management system that will combine the educational process, administrative, and research components;
- Conduct regular staff trainings to develop digital skills;
- Increasing student engagement in the development of digital services;
- Improving digital security policies and implementing relevant protocols;
- Developing a long-term strategic plan for digital transformation.

We must note here that the study was conducted in April 2025, which involved distributing a questionnaire on the traditional academic Google Forms platform.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSchRfUzbcfhZpnC4CVdN49e2UDaxgSW-iRRiBBkKCpj3imizA/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=108021877139600636265>

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