

## Book Review

**Zorn, A., Haywood, J., & Glachant, J.-M. (Eds.). (2018).  
Higher Education in the Digital Age: Moving Academia Online.  
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*Higher Education in the Digital Age: Moving Academia Online* is a collaborative effort of predominantly European scholars who aim to explore online education and digitalization experiences in European educational institutions. Edited by preeminent scholars in the field, this collection of papers presents different case studies of universities that are developing more of an online presence. The authors draw mainly on European contexts; however, their conclusions and practical tips to account for challenges and resistance to digitalization efforts are relevant to institutions and scholars around the globe.

Online education has recently become a new and developing research topic in higher education. Notable studies such as, Dalsgaard and Paulsen (2009) and Kumar, A., Kumar, P., Palvia, and Verma (2017), have theorized about the necessity for education to be more flexible, transparent, and accessible online. Online learning is often viewed as a practice that would improve the quality of education (Bonvillian & Singer, 2013; Sener, 2010). As such, some believe that online education will soon “attain full scale by becoming fully integrated into mainstream education” (Sener, 2010, p. 3). Currently, there is limited documented evidence of a comprehensive effort to digitize university practices. Many studies of going online are presented in the literature as analyses of particular online courses or practices (Gormley, 2014; Khan, Egbue, Palkie, & Madden, 2017; Stevens, 2013); however, these studies usually do not provide a holistic picture of institutional efforts towards digitalization. In this edited collection, Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant depart from this trend and bring the discussion to a more comprehensive level. According to these editors, to move higher education online is to lead a change. The goal of the book is to offer a holistic and practical perspective into the digital transformation of the higher education sector in Europe.

This book will guide those who seek ideas on how to keep pace with digital progress. The findings in this book can be appropriate for educators and researchers looking forward to moving their teaching and research practices online, or to those willing to initiate and implement a wide-scale institutional digital strategy in their universities. Furthermore, according to the editors, the purpose of this book is not just to advance the discussion on the online component in academia; its main goal is to provide accounts of the experiences from different educational settings and academic contexts to answer the question: “how [can] a large-scale ‘move online’ of higher education institutions [...] be achieved in practice?” (p. 2).

The timeliness of this book overlaps with recent developments in the world of European education. At this historical point, the era of globalization and internationalization seems to be slowly evolving into an era of regionalization (Knight, 2013). In light of this evolving regionalization, lifelong learning, the accessibility of education for diverse learners, and the development of the knowledge society (EHEA, 2007, 2009) have become the new cornerstones of higher education in Europe and elsewhere. In the context of European regionalization, the launching of the Bologna Process and the creation of the European

Higher Education Area call for innovations in academia (EHEA, 2009): researchers search for new ways to communicate and share their research, educators require new ways to redesign curricula and re-consider their teaching approaches, and universities need to redefine their role as higher education institutions. Moving online offers new opportunities for all higher education stakeholders. Moreover, Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant emphasize that the digitalization of education enhances constructivist ways of learning as the digital age provides “the more democratic space” (p. 200) for learners to question, create, and share knowledge.

In the introductory chapter, the editors deeply explore the idea of moving academia online as a response to the demands of the modern digital society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They highlight the world’s move online in many areas, and they regret that traditional higher education institutions prefer to remain stagnant and detached from global digitalization practices. The book makes readers visualize contemporary academic realities as the balance between two different approaches: (1) the advocates of the first approach comprehend the online tools only as toys and ignore the full potential of what the digital era might offer to academia; however, their opponents (2) believe that digitalization presents academia with innovative ways to stay “at the forefront of knowledge creation and sharing in the future” (p. 2). While the book challenges the higher education sector to grasp the numerous opportunities offered by the digital age, the editors are careful in their approach to moving online; they emphasize that online education cannot be a goal or a benefit in itself. In other words, digitalization should not be for the sake of digitalization, so moving online should serve only as a tool to create, share, and access knowledge. At the same time, Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant question whether moving online poses a threat to higher education institutions and to what extent digitalization will change higher education.

The introductory chapter also discusses the emergence of new actors in the knowledge sector—an unidentifiable “crowd of contributors from around the world” (p. 3), which actively participates in knowledge production and sharing. The emergence of the knowledge sector is caused by the so-called “online-ization” of the knowledge societies. As a result, there are the traditionally recognized actors—world-leading experts in the knowledge sector—and the new and more popular entrants, the anonymous contributors. The editors initiate a discussion around possible scenarios in the competition between the quality control of knowledge creation and the crowdsourcing of knowledge. They reflect on the future role of these two knowledge forces and on the question of who will be a decisive voice in the digital age.

To address the issue of limited documented experiences of higher education online-ization, Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant organized the chapters to offer readers accounts of real-life experiences, practices, and examples of moving the academia online, starting from teaching and learning, and ending with more comprehensive case studies of moving entire projects online. In the vein of a more holistic approach, this collection is built to provide insights of moving academia online through the analysis of successful online practices in core higher education activities: teaching and learning (Chapters 1 to 4), knowledge exchange (Chapters 5 to 7), and research (Chapters 8 and 9). Additionally, Chapter 10 offers readers a look at institutional efforts to move online through the prism of all three of the above-mentioned academic activities. By outlining these sets of activities, the editors emphasize that moving online will result in deep integration, and they stress the interconnectedness and overlapping of teaching, research, and knowledge exchange in a comprehensive institutional strategy to move online.

To guide and support digitalization of higher education, Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant suggest a framework of the four dimensions: (1) accessibility, (2) openness, (3) communication and collaboration, and (4) time. These four dimensions can help higher education address modern challenges such as a more diverse student body, international cooperation, and competitions between universities, insufficient state funding and income generation, and quality of research and teaching. In the editors’ opinion, the four dimensions of moving knowledge-sharing and creation online, as well as their different combinations, might also help universities in redefining their role as higher education institutions in today’s knowledge society. The chapters are presented both to capture the opportunities and benefits of higher education digitalization aligning with the four dimensions, and to shed light on the potential challenges of online practices.

Chapter 1, “The transformation of distance learning at the Open University: The need for a new pedagogy for online learning,” opens the discussion on the latest online teaching and learning practices. Here, Marr focuses on the transformations of distance education in the UK. Using the Open University experience, she explores the range of issues the institution faces in its attempt to preserve their fundamental principle of learning-through-assessment and to discover other ways to use digital technology in their

pedagogy. Analyzing the functioning of the OU, one of the oldest distant education providers, Marr discusses how the Open University explores new forms of quality assurance and enhancement, and develops into a leading innovator of online pedagogies.

In Chapter 2, “Making education better: Implementing pedagogical change through technology in a modern institution,” Bryant continues the conversation on innovations in online teaching and learning. He questions the appropriateness of discussing institutional change through the binaries of new versus old, traditional versus technocratic, and technology versus pedagogies. In their eagerness to harness technology developments, contemporary universities might forget that any innovation in education should be primarily focused on students and their distinctive needs. To navigate themselves in the contemporary educational environment, universities require strategic pedagogical change. Moreover, Bryant emphasizes that this pedagogical change should go hand-in-hand with technological innovations. Making a case for pedagogical change through technology, the author suggests that institutions should employ the *Middle Out* approach (p. 49), instead of the *bottom-up* or *top-down*. According to Bryant, the bottom-up or top-down approaches fail because they are incapable of involving the majority of the organization in the change. When the bottom-up changes are initiated through the success of small-funded projects, and the top-down rely on enthusiastic leaders, the Middle Out approach leads the transformation from the center of the institution. As such, Middle Out aims at developing the culture of acceptance and engagement with change.

Chapter 3 focuses on how concepts of traditional pedagogy are changing with the introduction of online teaching and learning. Thus, “Translearning: Unfolding educational institutions to scaffold lifelong networked learning” explores the institutions of traditional learning and how they experience disruptions in the new reality of the networked learning. The author, Peña-López, examines and re-conceptualizes the school, classroom, textbook, library, syllabi, schedule, and teacher in the context of online learning. Through this re-conceptualization, he emphasizes the necessity of reflecting on how online learning tools redefine the ontology of these institutions. For example, schools and universities, as learning centers, used to require students’ physical presence at a specific scheduled moment; with the emergence of virtual campuses, educational centers are no longer restricted by the two fundamental categories of space and time.

The next two chapters continue to explore the opportunities of online teaching and learning by providing examples of digitalization efforts in selected educational institutions. In the case of moving the institution’s flagship course online (Chapter 4, “How to design a 21st-century online course that makes learning happen for all”), Zorn, S. Canestrini, and C. Canestrini discuss the significant challenges experienced by a school in Florence, as well as the responses to these challenges. Some difficulties include the widespread skepticism towards online-ization and technology, the unwillingness to change old teaching habits, and reduced budgets, among others. Through overcoming these challenges, deep institutional transformations in the approach(es) to knowledge creation and sharing have taken place. These transformations have been reflected in the new approach(es) towards designing courses, engaging learners, and developing the school’s new training portfolio. In the case of the University of Edinburgh (Chapter 5, “Leading innovation: Digital education in a traditional university”), Haywood approaches online teaching and learning from an administrative perspective. This chapter places primary emphasis on leadership for innovation and institutional change. By reviewing the two university moving online initiatives, the author shares several lessons from experience: institutional change requires a consistent long-term institutional vision; the recognition that change takes time and leadership; change requires a smart allocation of governance processes, trust, and a return on investment approach, all of which are crucial when leading innovation.

To expand the theme of leadership for innovation, Birdi presents, in Chapter 6, the specifics of developing and launching a new online economics course. An international team of experts created the course in response to public criticisms of the university’s economics program. The author provides the specifics of the project and describes it as an attempt to move towards effective online pedagogy. The in-depth analysis of the project may serve as a source of invaluable insights on how to divert from a simple transferring of textbook material to an online format. Instead of the mechanical transfer of the course content online, the authors of the course tried to re-envision educational content and pedagogy. Such re-envisioning, according to Birdi, occurred through a variety of viewpoints brought together by the international authorial team (pp. 129-130). These changes included the change in the traditional sequence of presenting material from simple to complex and the extensive use of empirical evidence on online teaching practices from all over the world.

Stewart offers a more personal perspective on digital scholarly leadership in Chapter 7, “Identity at the core: Open and digital scholarly leadership.” She focuses on digital scholarly leaders, that is, people who have the most visible online identities, lead online scholarly discussions, and develop their digital presence on “many-to-many communications” (p. 145). The author leads the readers through her journey as a digital scholar on social media platforms. The chapter reflects on the nature of the influences built through scholarly profiles and digitally mediated engagement. According to Stewart, such leadership is manifested as individuals become known through their digital profiles, engage with others, share content, build a reputation through the circulation of their content, and develop relationships through a participatory exchange. Discussed here are the capacities of the online platforms to enable digital scholarly leadership and their potential for participatory practices.

Chapters 8 and 9, “Sharing knowledge at a research university: Experiences from London School of Economics” by Williams and Gilson and “Effective online communication for policy advisors: Experience from the Bruegel think tank” by Porcaro, discuss online communication strategies and institutional practices for knowledge sharing. While attempts are made to understand the increasing role of online technology in research communication in both chapters, the authors approach the issue differently. Williams and Gilson concentrate more on the opportunities that social media—mainly blogs—provide to both researcher and research institutions. Such opportunities vary from professional development and online learning to better visibility of researchers’ work and widespread research communication. On a more practical note, Porcaro looks in-depth into how to set an institutional online communication strategy to initiate and navigate policy change. The author explores, in detail, the steps undertaken by the Bruegel think tank: aligning online communication strategy with the institutional mission and goals; defining the audiences to which online communication is directed; monitoring audience’s behaviours while delivering communication messages; and aligning the online tools in correspondence to the audience’s behaviours.

In the final chapter, “Moving a higher education school online: Florence School of Regulation’s all-around online-ization,” Zorn, Bernardo, and Canestrini describe the case of the school’s strategic move online. The key message of Chapter 10 is that online-ization should be a comprehensive institutional effort, which allows for deep integration of core institutional activities of training, research, and policy dialogue. On the example of the Florence School of Regulations, the authors show how the school has made a comprehensive effort towards becoming a leading academic thinking hub. Such a move towards online-ization of a higher educational institution became possible and successful because of the three successive steps: (a) making knowledge open and accessible through language, channels, and formats; (b) editing knowledge for self-directed learning and contribution to the building of expertise outside academia; and (c) knowledge co-creation by blurring the boundaries of expert/instructor and learner/public (p. 181). At the same time, the authors emphasize that institutional culture becomes not only important but also crucial for the school online-ization efforts. Therefore, the culture of constant questioning, of mutual recognition of expertise, and measured risk-taking and learning has turned to be an asset in the school’s online-ization. Despite the successful case presented in this chapter, the authors warn that similar digitalization endeavours may lead to numerous challenges, such as re-training researchers to engage in online practices and motivating scholars to spend considerable time on communicating their research results online.

The editors carefully consider the positive and negative factors of moving academia online. While they recognize the enhancement and transformation of higher education promised by online-ization, Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant warn against the many pitfalls entailed by digitalization and the various traps hidden behind its promises. For instance, the editors warn that “[k]nowledge that is made openly accessible online might well reproduce existing power relations, or [...] radicalize opinions as online makes it easier to meet like-minded people and thus reinforce closed discourses of those holding radical views” (p. 12). The book leaves readers inspired with ideas and buzzing with countless questions of a theoretical and practical nature. This book provokes reflections on whether the benefits of digitalization outweigh the potential dangers, how these dangers can be averted, and whether going online will replace (in the very near future) the so-called traditional forms of teaching and learning, research, and knowledge exchange. To add more value to the book, the discussion of these issues could have been initiated rather than implied.

There is no discussion of whether online-ization efforts of non-European universities would differ in any way from the efforts of European higher education institutions. Further analysis of moving academia online could be taken beyond the regional level. The institutional experiences of the North American,

South American, and Asian universities might be of value in distinguishing common online practices or unique local perspectives considering their rich experiences in the field.

To meet the needs of today's students, universities should become the institutions of tomorrow: open, accessible, and responsive to a continually changing world of research and education. According to the editors, a move online will blur the existing boundaries between what is traditionally considered inside and outside academia. Zorn, Haywood, and Glachant believe that the absence of these boundaries will bring new openness and transparency in research, teaching, and learning. For instance, the involvement of external experts, the circulation of different ideas, and multiple possibilities for communication and collaboration available only in online spaces will question and extend beyond "the exclusive individual academic of the ivory tower" (p. 201). This collection provides valuable insights for those who would lead educational change in the digital age.

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