The Digital Walls of the University:
Translating New Metrics of Labour, Education and Mobility in the COVID-19 Crisis

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Background

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis, universities expect a drastic decrease in student mobility, and uncertainty surrounds the prospects of international students coming to Europe from other regions.

The European Commission calls for digital transformations of higher education by way of deeper institutional cooperation, implementation of digital governance tools, clear and automatic procedures for credit recognition, virtual campuses, and blended mobility for all students and staff.

Approach

Debates over the faith of the University during and possibly after the Covid-19 crisis have overwhelmingly focused on the technological solutions to challenges posed by distant learning, accessibility, and mobility restrictions.

1. What considerations and questions can we rise about the bridging of Education ⟷ Skills ⟷ Labour market via statistical models?

2. How does technology translate across social, economical and cultural fields?

3. Can we reverse the assumption that "AI is transforming education" and to ask ourselves "how education transforms AI"?

Findings

1. When a student or faculty member from Karlsruhe, one from Cambridge and one from Lagos, for instance, access the digital space, they do not access and enter one and the same space

2. The adoption of technological products, such as video conferencing platform, have reinforced the ideology of STI transferred from "innovation centers" to the "peripheries"

3. Public-private partnerships relying upon AI-driven taxonomies of the EU labour market extend beyond the European Union to influence HE curricula outside the communitarian area

Conclusion

Digital platforms in HE have remarked how the process of "catching up" with a model is still a powerful force in education policy across regional and national borders. Statistical models employed in the production of education as a global commodity in the digital space, involve the continual redrawing of the borders that separate universities from their outside through systems of differential inclusion and multiplication of labour regimes.

Case

The Covid-19 crisis has drastically accelerated the process of reconfiguration of borders between the university and its outside. In this scenario, the digital walls of the university are units of artificial measure (metrics) that organize the social division of labour.

Today's AI-driven approach to University reforms focuses on establishing real-time translatability among different demands within a single tool of governance.

These demands include:

1. Flexible and timely distribution of the workforce

2. Defining a set of (non-cognitive) skills and competencies to work in virtual mobility

3. A metric system measuring skills and competencies unrecognized by formal certificates

4. Constructing alignment between credentials and current trends of the labour market

5. Restructuring university curricula according to their performance rate

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Modeling the Crisis.
The Role of AI and Statistical Models in the COVID-19 Pandemic
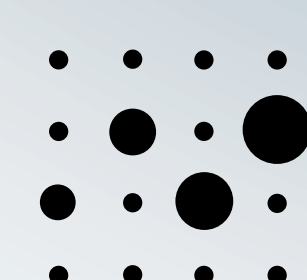
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