

Research on the Ethical Dilemma of Digital Intelligence Technology Dependence in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Human Subjectivity

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Abstract: With the deepening of the digital and intelligent transformation of higher education, the efficiency of administrative management and teaching practice in colleges and universities has been improved. However, the resulting technological dependence also brings profound ethical dilemmas. From the perspective of human subjectivity and reflective rationality, this study explores the phenomenon of alienation in the digitalization of colleges and universities. The study found that excessive technological dependence affects people's subjectivity in educational practice, leading to data worship and the alienation of educational labor. In order to cope with these challenges, it is necessary to reconstruct the logic of educational practice, restore the essence of educational labor, and ensure that the subject of education maintains its dominant position in the intelligent era, so as to realize the free and complete development of individuals.

Keywords: Human Subjectivity; Digital Intelligent Transformation; Technological Dependence

1. Introduction

In 2022, the United Nations Education Reform Summit listed digital transformation as one of the five priority areas of action. In 2024, the United Nations Future Summit adopted the Global Digital Compact, and many countries have implemented national strategies for digital education. Artificial intelligence is rapidly promoting the digital transformation of higher education and gradually integrating into university management, classroom teaching and student development. Colleges and universities actively promote the construction of smart campus, set up artificial intelligence general courses, introduce intelligent learning aids, upgrade the educational administration management system, and add academic early

warning functions. These intelligent tools optimize the governance process of colleges and universities to a certain extent, and improve the efficiency and service level of education management.

However, the wide application of artificial intelligence technology in universities has also caused practical problems such as technology abuse and blind dependence. In colleges and universities, the role of artificial intelligence has changed from auxiliary tool to dependent object. Many managers, teachers, and students show blind trust in algorithms and often lack the necessary critical thinking. In the long run, this will stifle subjectivity and produce new forms of alienation. Therefore, it is very important to examine this digital and intelligent transformation from the perspective of Marxism in order to defend the humanistic nature of higher education.

2. Ethical dilemma of the dependence of intelligence technology in colleges and universities from the perspective of Marxist Philosophical Anthropology

Based on Marxism, a systematic analysis framework can be constructed to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for analyzing the ethical dilemmas faced by colleges and universities in the process of promoting digital and intelligent transformation.

2.1 Dissolution of Social Essence and Species-Being

2.1.1 Erosion of the Practical Foundation of Social Relations

In *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx wrote that the human essence is "the ensemble of social relations." [1] Education is fundamentally a practical form of social relations. This social foundation is destroyed by an over-reliance on intelligent technology, which simplifies complicated educational exchanges to standardized technological processes. Learning

devolves from an active social practice into a collection of data when students rely on AI to finish tasks and data production takes the role of critical thinking. As a result, education becomes less important as a means of socialization and people's social nature is neglected.

2.1.2 Compressing the "Species-Character" of Free and Conscious Activity

Marx pointed out in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 that "conscious life activities directly distinguish human from animal life activities" [2]. The real human labor is the unity of the subject's free creation and conscious reflection. However, the over-reliance on artificial intelligence weakens the realization of this kind of characteristics. Students who turn to AI for shortcutting cognitive challenges, and teachers who depend on it for lesson plan generation, risk turning what should be free and conscious creative labor into passive, mechanical routines. This kind of dependence does not just reduce independent creativity - it actively discourages it. Because generative AI provides instant answers, it nudges users toward passivity, dulls the willingness to think for oneself, and gradually reduces creative educational work to a mere exercise in tool operation.

2.1.3 Restricting the Comprehensive Development of Individuals

Marx systematically expounded the theory of all-round development of human beings. In many colleges and universities, there is a phenomenon of over-reliance on artificial intelligence. This phenomenon will affect students' independent thinking ability, innovation ability and social ability. This situation contradicts Marx's assumption that "the free development of each individual is the prerequisite for the free development of all individuals [3]" Therefore, we need to rethink the role of artificial intelligence in higher education and make it a tool to promote human development, rather than the cause of new dilemmas.

2.2 Alienated subjective practice and cognitive structure

2.2.1 Destroying the subjective basis of practice

Starting from the Marxist view of practice, practice is the way of human existence, and human beings confirm their subjectivity in active practical activities. Marx stressed: "Whether objective truth can be attributed to human

thinking is not a theoretical problem, but a practical problem" [4]. Only through practice can we deepen people's cognition. However, over-reliance on artificial intelligence is changing the practice mode of colleges and universities. Managers obtain data through algorithms instead of research; teachers use artificial intelligence instead of teaching thinking; students directly use artificial intelligence to complete tasks. These behaviors will make them gradually lose their dominant position as human beings. Artificial intelligence will change from an auxiliary tool to a substitute for human practice.

2.2.2 Replacing Practical Rationality with Technical Rationality

Marx believes that social existence determines social consciousness. This theory is also applicable to universities. The practical rationality emphasized by Marx requires human beings to think independently based on objective reality. The output of artificial intelligence seems to be objective and neutral, but actually hides artificially set standards and logic. This leads to the fact that educational practice is difficult to meet people's real learning needs, which will gradually affect people's cognition and let people use algorithms instead of judgments.

2.2.3 Reducing the Space for Autonomous Cognitive Exploration

Marxist epistemology believes that practice is the only criterion for testing truth. However, the rapid provision of standardized answers by artificial intelligence will limit individuals' active thinking and exploration practice. Human beings rely too much on intelligent technology, so that artificial intelligence replaces human thinking, reduces the process of active practice, and weakens the understanding of the world. The technology that should have served people has limited people's development and deepened the individual's dependence on technology. This situation echoes Marx's theory of alienation.

2.3 Catalyzing Labor Alienation and Data Worship

2.3.1 Alienating the Practical Process of Educational Labor

Marx's theory of "alienated labor" holds that the alienation of labor process refers to the state of self-alienation of workers within labor activities. When the fruits of labor begin to dominate the workers, such labor becomes

alienated into forced labor. Just as teachers, students and managers rely too much on artificial intelligence, they transfer a lot of labor in the process of learning, teaching and management to technology. This transfer alienates educational labor and weakens individual subjectivity and the value of labor.

2.3.2 Engendering Data Worship

In his analysis of the capitalist commodity economy, Marx criticized the commodity fetishism, arguing that it made people focus only on the prices of commodities while neglecting the labor relationship between people. Such a criticism can be used to describe the phenomenon of data worship in the digital transformation of universities. With the widespread application of artificial intelligence in universities, many people regard the conclusions output by algorithms as objective facts. However, few people pay attention to the artificial settings of standards within the algorithms. The educational management process and educational practical activities have been simplified into quantifiable data, while education and humanistic care have been neglected.

2.3.3 Exacerbating the phenomenon of instrumentalization of personal value

Marx believes that free and conscious labor embodies the essence of human nature, and alienated labor separates human beings from this essence. In the context of technology dependence, the value hierarchy of education has been reversed. When quantitative data indicators become the primary measure of educational success, teachers and students are seen as data-generating tools to meet institutional indicators, thereby depriving education of its moral and humanistic purpose.

3. The Guiding Path of Digital Intelligence in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Marxist Philosophical Anthropology

The rapid development of artificial intelligence is not intended to erode the essence of humanity, but to give it new meaning and value in changing times. Based on the theoretical basis of Marxist Philosophical Anthropology, we must re-examine the essence of human existence in the era of artificial intelligence, so as to provide a reliable theoretical basis for the challenges faced by digital and intelligent education in higher education.

3.1 Reconstructing the Logic of Educational Practice

According to Marxism, practice is the fundamental prerequisite for transforming the world and affirming human existence and social relations. Over-reliance on smart technologies has rendered educational practice superficial and eroded individuals' cognitive abilities. To this end, higher education institutions should clearly define the boundaries of technology use, limit its excessive influence, and establish guidelines for staff, students and administrators to encourage independent inquiry, the accumulation of practical experience and the conduct of field research.

3.2 Restoring the Essence of Educational Labor

Marx believes that free and conscious creative labor embodies the essence of human beings. In higher education, institutions should rethink the roles of human beings and intelligent tools within the labor process, to restore the intrinsic value of educational labor. Mechanical and routine administrative tasks can be delegated to intelligent tools, while educational labor that requires critical thinking and creativity remains in human hands. A single-dimensional data-driven assessment model should also be abandoned. For educators, they must recognize the irreplaceable social value of educational labor, take control of their own workflow, realize self-worth through independent and creative practice, and gradually reduce excessive dependence on intelligent tools.

3.3 Establish the Goal of Comprehensive Human Development

Marx argues that a future society should be grounded on the principle of "the comprehensive and free development of each individual"[5]. In this context, universities need to assess the appropriate scale and scope of technology use. They also need to curb excessive reliance on technological tools, and make use of digital environments to recreate authentic practical learning scenarios. The aim is to restore the inherent social attributes of education. While respecting the objective laws of technology, we should place individuals at the center, helping them move away from the alienating condition of being dominated by technology. It also helps to guide them back toward a path of freedom and

comprehensive development.

4. Conclusion

The application of AI in higher education is an inevitable trend. However, technology itself is objectively neutral; the ethical dilemmas stem not from the tools themselves, but from the unchecked technological dependence of human subjects. From the perspective of Marxist Philosophical Anthropology, over-reliance on AI suppresses human subjective initiative, hollows out the social essence of education, alienates labor, and reduces human value to quantified data.

In order to solve these ethical risks, higher education must return to its fundamental purpose : to cultivate talents with all-round development. Under the guidance of Marxist principles, universities must rebuild their practical logic, restore the creative value of educational labor, and resist data worship. By maintaining the subjective status of human beings and striking a balance between technical efficiency and humanistic value, universities can ensure that intelligent technology serves the free, conscious and comprehensive development of human beings.

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