

A Matter of Knowledge Transfer: Deepening the Understanding of Digital Transformation Through Analogies and Metaphors

Stephanie Reiner

Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg, Germany

stephanie.reiner@uni-bamberg.dee-mail

Abstract

This research aims to enhance the understanding of digital transformation by exploring the use of analogies and metaphors, which are recognized scientific methods in this field. By adopting a literature-based approach, the paper highlights the value of analogies and metaphors in developing theories and transferring knowledge within digital transformation research. It reveals how analogies and metaphors serve as mental models connecting to existing scientific knowledge while generating new ideas to address complex issues. The first section introduces the meanings of analogies and metaphors and clarifies their differences. It explains the processes involved in metaphorical and analogical thinking and provides examples from the scientific literature on digital transformation. The exploratory literature review reveals various analogies and metaphors related to digital transformation and illustrates how they can deepen our understanding of the concept. The findings indicate that scientists describe digital transformation as "metamorphosis" and "pregnant elephant". These examples, among others, demonstrate that analogies and metaphors are deeply connected to cultural contexts, which are vital in knowledge transfer. In the context of globalization, this paper suggests that contextualizing analogies and metaphors can enhance the effectiveness of knowledge transfer.

Keywords: digital transformation, analogy, metaphor, knowledge transfer